

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode 36: Feelings Follow Feats: Using Kindness to Boss Our Emotions into Line

Cheri

Do you find it hard to be kind to imperfect people?

Amy

One of our listeners shared her struggle with us. She said, "I assume that all my co-workers will go above and beyond...and I get mad and upset at them if they do not work according to my own standards."

Cheri

Oh yes, I'm pretty sure somewhere it says that we don't have to show kindness to people who don't **deserve** it.

Amy

Oh, I've lived by **that** rule!

Cheri

This is Cheri Gregory...

Amy

...and I'm Amy Carroll...

Cheri

...and you're listening to "Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules."

Today we're processing what we learned from last week's interview with Shaunti Feldhahn, author of the ***The Kindness Challenge: 30 Days to Improve Any Relationship***

Amy

If you sometimes struggle with being consistently kind, you are not alone.

We're excited to share what we've been learning about this practical tool called KINDNESS.

Cheri

I am really looking forward to processing the interview with Shaunti because I had so much fun watching your face during that interview! And I'm sure my face looked much the same.

Amy

Well it's just so practical for me because I have this relationship that has been damaged - somewhat on both sides, you know on both sides, but it's someone I deeply love, and treasure, and respect. And I've had so much trouble getting my feelings back in line to where I want them to be. What Shaunti was saying was so revolutionary to me because I thought, 'this is it! This is what I gotta do!' And I started putting into practice already in the last two days and...

Cheri

Good for you!

Amy

And I already feel my feelings shifting!

Cheri

When I saw the title of her book, I was like, 'oh, well, okay, you know, it's Shaunti - sure, we'll have her on - but you know the topic doesn't really apply.

Amy

I felt the same way! And then, well oh gosh, there's just so much...

<LAUGHING>

But I you know, but then, as I listened to her almost immediately I just felt that my heart was being pierced. Particularly that she had these action steps. So I know you wanted to speak to that. I'm going to let you go first to that. That you had asked her a feelings question and she told us what to do I'm like, "Oh, bother."

Cheri

Did you notice that?

Amy

As Pooh would say, "Oh, bother."

Cheri

Yeah well I was really hoping she would give me something to play around with in my head some more. Because I love living in my head. I look so good in my own head, you know? And then I don't have to face reality. And so yeah, she was um...she went...she went straight to the chase. I was actually a little miffed with her, cause I thought, 'I don't think she understood my question.' And as I drove to town later in the day I'm like, 'oh no, she understood my question.'

So reflecting on Shaunit's suggestion that other people's ideas might be better than ours? I mean that was revolutionary. Because clearly she doesn't understand my ideas, but whatever. But, it made me really...

<LAUGHING>

Amy

We really shouldn't be laughing so much! Anyway go ahead.

Cheri

Anyway so we can either laugh or we can cry, so um...so – it made me realize how contradictory perfectionism can actually be in my head because on the one hand perfectionism tells me I am the worst of the worst, that I can never do anything good enough, and that everybody is way better than me. But then, if anybody dares contradict me or correct me, then suddenly I'm like, "Well how dare they! How dare they!" Only I am allowed to bash on myself and everybody else is supposed to agree with me. And when I was kind of processing that and putting it actually in writing, I went, 'that's nuts.' I mean it's kind of like a Jekyll and Hyde kind of thing. And I realized this has been happening so long in my head it actually feels normal. And that's scary.

Amy

I haven't read the book yet – although now God is calling me to lead it now at our church – bummer...

Cheri

I hear you.

Amy

...and awesome, I cannot wait! But – this idea in the book of being Polly-annie-ish, that's supposed to be, you know a bad thing – that it's this idea of looking at the positive while completely ignoring the negative. And as you've said so many times, the two are not mutually exclusive. You know our emotions are not mutually exclusive that we can feel pain at the same

time we can feel joy. But what Shaunti is challenging us to do is to do both. That we can look things square in the face – see the reality of it, but choose kindness. To choose to say the positive thing even though we fully know the negative thing. Here’s what was revolutionary for me as she talked about kindness.

Cheri

Do tell.

Amy

She referred to kindness several times as a tool.

Cheri

Oooh...yeah.

Amy

And I thought, a tool? The first time she said it, it sounded almost manipulative to me.

Cheri

Mmmmm...interesting...

Amy

So I thought, ‘so I’m gonna be nice just to get somebody else to be nice to me?’ But then she talked about the difference between nice-ness and kindness that kindness is deeper, that niceness is surfacey. Niceness is what I do a lot of the time. Gosh I hate to say this. Where I’m going to say the nice things *to your face* – this is the people pleaser part because I want us to get along and I want us to at least look nice on the surface but I might say, “Bless your heart” as I drive away.

<LAUGHING>

The southern curse! And so niceness is doing the nice thing on the surface – kindness is taking it a step further and not saying the negative thing as you walk away as you drive away behind closed doors. So that’s not Pollyanna, AT all. That is knowing the reality and choosing the positive things instead. Amazing. Transforming!

Cheri

Here's an insight that I wrote down today. I make my kindness dependent on the other person. Like, depending on how they behave is my level of kindness. And what I got out of Shaunti's conversation with us, is that Jesus says that my kindness is dependent on my relationship with him.

Amy

Ugh. Oh OUCH!

Cheri

I know!

Amy

My heart.

Cheri

But when I write it down like that there's no wiggle room. And I know it's true. What I hear Shaunti saying is we stay consistent. Regardless of how they treat us we have the integrity to stay kind because we're a kind person because we're connected to Christ. And this totally flies in the face of what both perfectionism and people-pleasing does to us, which is 'I'll be one way to you, and another way to you, and another way to you.' And what the Kindness Challenge says, is no we're going to be the same person to everybody.

Amy

Well I think both of us had these big ah-ha moments as we talked to Shaunti that just as she confessed at the beginning that she wasn't as kind as she thought she was. I had that realization almost immediately. And I've always considered myself a kind person – I have a tender heart – I love people, but as we talked to Shaunti, I really did realize that I'm not as kind as I thought I was. It's so interesting because as we talk to our listeners – I mean I hope they have all listened to Shaunti talk about this already. If you haven't, be sure to go back and listen. But it was interesting because we talk in the speaker/writer world about 'felt need'...

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

...and so think what you said about the title of the book, when you saw the title of the book and we didn't feel a need for it. Because...we thought...

Cheri

Oh no....

Amy

...we've already got it.

Cheri

I felt a need. I felt a need to buy several dozen copies and pass them out to all the unkind people I know! Anonymously, you know? I was just like...I would leave it on their doorstep...

<LAUGHING>

Amy

So if you think about the subtitle: *Thirty Days to Improve Any Relationship*, oh! That's where the felt need is! It's those damaged relationships that the kindness helps to fix. Which you know we use it as a tool – it's funny because that is the felt need we are like – oh! I need to fix that relationship! I believe what Shaunti is getting at – and what will get at us is that we need fixed. That there is something in us – it's that sin nature in us that wants to critique and gripe and complain...oh gosh!

Cheri

You know one of the things she said in the book she had a particular scripture she zeroed in on, she said, "Those of us who take the bible seriously need to take unconditional kindness seriously too. There's a pretty sobering command in the second letter the apostle Paul wrote to an up and coming leader named Timothy. And then she quotes from 2 Timothy 2:24, 'A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.'

And as I was looking at this yesterday, I saw something that I was like, ugh, I wish I hadn't seen that. Because it's a list of 4 things. Must not quarrel, be kind to everyone, be able to teach, be patient with difficult people. In scripture when a list like that goes together often there's conditionality. Like if you're not doing one of them like it ruins the whole list. So what I saw, almost our ability to teach or to disciple others or to minister to others well or mentor others – is connected to the other 3 things. Like if I want to teach or if I want to have influence, then I can't quarrel, I have to be kind to everyone – and the last one! Be patient with difficult people! I had never seen all of those together. I mean cause – I want to teach! I want to tell people what to do! I want the permission slip that says, 'Cheri gets to tell everyone what to do!' But that's not found in scripture anywhere. And so I was really convicted as I looked at this. I can't just

highlight the teach part and go 'ah-ha!' That's what I get to do! They all go together. The not quarreling, the being kind to everyone AND being patient with difficult people. And none of this is possible on our own. I mean I'm looking at this going I need more quiet time. I need a lot more Jesus for any of this to happen consistently.

Amy

That is so good and I did not see those connections even when you sent me the scripture ahead of time. But I'm thinking of the teachers that I have really learned from. To learn from people we have to trust them. And unkind people are not trustworthy. When you think about it, that friend who talks about other people to you which I gotta tell you that that feeds my flesh man, I love to have the scoop and the skinny. I don't pass along gossip but I sure do love to hear it sometimes. And that I had to kill that thought in myself because that friend - what I realized after a while is 'oh, I don't trust them', because if they're talking to someone about someone, then they talk about me too when I'm not there. Well - we don't trust those kinds of people - and we can't learn from those kinds of people. So that's amazing. And the whole - be kind to *everyone* - why'd he have to throw that word in there?

Cheri

I'm not happy.

Amy

Wow. So let's think about the ripple effects of kindness.. Number 1 it works on us - it makes us more Christ-like which is the ultimate goal. Number 2 it helps our relationships, that's our felt need, it improves them, but then the ripple out that you're saying is that it increases our influence for Christ in this world.

Cheri

It makes us safe people.

Amy

It's powerful! Kindness is powerful. I've kind of thought of it as a 'eh' mamby pamby word before we listened to Shaunti and processed this. "Oh be nice!"

Cheri

I've also thought that it just came naturally. I know a few people who are just amazingly kind, and I just assumed that they were born with it, and thus its effortless and thus it can't be learned. But we know from the mindset research we know anything is learnable. And now that I know kind of where I'm starting I realize I've got a lot of work to do. It's a goal now to become a kinder person.

Amy

Well Shaunti in her book and in the challenge she's given – the free challenge online, and I looked at the website there's a tremendous amount there for free – everybody should check it out – but she has given us three concrete steps. Those are doable things everyday with one person. To practice with one person first. Genius! Because it really doesn't help us toward real transformative change. It taps into the neuroplasticity – love that word – of our brains.

Cheri

I love that you used the word *neuroplasticity*! It's true!

Now we did have a really good question from one of our interns about what about times when we really do need to address an area of concern? Do we think that Shaunti was saying that we can never actually really bring up real problems in our relationships?

Amy

As I thought about that question, I think that kindness actually earns us the right to deal with the real problems. I had a friend who said, you have to earn the right to say the hard things to me. I think that's true of all of us.

Cheri

Absolutely.

Amy

If you have no relationship with me, you don't have the right to say the hard things to me. It's only relationship that builds that right. So kindness is evidence of love – as we were just talking about this ripple effect, really, kindness is the overflow of true love – agape love – God-like, Christ-like love. So it's the evidence of that. And if there's no evidence for true love, people, again don't trust us. So they won't trust us to say the hard things. Yeah I think kindness builds a foundation for being able to say the hard things.

Cheri

Okay so if niceness is just that surface relationship, then it doesn't build trust. So if we've just had a surface nicey-nice relationship with somebody but then they suddenly want to go deep into telling us some hard truth about ourselves, it doesn't work. Because all we have is a surface relationship with them. And so what you're saying is if we've gone ahead and build the deep relationship of love through kindness, then we can also go deeper with the harder issues. That makes total sense.

Amy

The way that we're defying nice is very – well we've used the surface but let's just use the word fake. People have a radar for that. I have a radar for that, you have a radar for that – we can sniff that out in a second. If people have a surface commitment to us.

Cheri

Oh yeah.

Amy

So I think what you're saying is true.

Cheri

So they can't just have a mostly fake relationship with us and then want to do genuinely hard things. It doesn't work that way. We're either all in or you're just at the top. And it's okay to have surface relationships I mean, it's not okay to fake it all the time, but we have a lot of acquaintance type relationships, but I don't want those kind of people trying to tell me hard truths. I'm not going to listen.

Amy

Right. I don't trust them. The trust isn't there. That's a good word for all of us – gosh we could go into a whole show on mentoring. But if we're going to be mentors we have to truly love people. I have people - it's one of the values in my life that I have truth tellers in my life. But there are a couple qualifications for those people. One is that they live it themselves, another is that they are more committed to the word of God more than their own opinions, and the third one is that they love me.

Cheri

Those are great!

Amy

Love is shown in kindness and those are the women I've said – well, and my husband – that you have the right to put time in check when I need to be in check. But without those things? Yeah – you can.....not say anything to me!

<LAUGHING>

Cheri

I was waiting for you to fill in that blank...

Amy

I was trying to think of a nice way to say that.

<LAUGHING>

Cheri

Well we've kind of covered grit in that we've talked about here the fact that we're not avoiding problems but that kindness lays the foundation to do the grit work of facing real problems because there is the love and the trust that has been built because of the tool – the tool of kindness builds the trust and the love then. And then, in terms of grace...

Amy

Okay, here's Galatians 5 of course the fruits of the spirits – kindness is in there. But the one that just kept nagging at me that I had to go look up this morning is Romans 2:4 that says, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" So God – Jesus, our example for everything that we do, sets the example by being kind to us when we were horrible. We were separated from him. We were yet sinners – He was kind to us and that's how he led us to repentance. So that the thing. And then as I read it, I was like ah! God, you used kindness as a tool!

Cheri

This is amazing.

Amy

To repair relationship with us!

Cheri

Kindness, kindness...and to lead to repentance!

Amy

Isn't that beautiful?

Cheri

So what perfectionism makes me want to do is I'm mean to the other person because I want them to repent. I want to ring an apology out of them. What this is saying that as I am kind, I am going to be convicted for my own repentance, which is really – we know that this is the only place we have any right to mess. We can meddle with ourselves but we don't get to meddle with anyone else. Whoa!

Amy

Practicing kindness can transform even our relationships with difficult people not because it changes them but because it changes *us*.

Cheri

From Episodes 35, 35 1/2, and 36, the bad rule we need to break sounds a lot like this:

My level of kindness is dependent on the behavior of others.

Amy

The fact we can focus on instead is:

When I walk close to Jesus, I'm kind even to those who don't deserve it.

Cheri

Be sure to stop by [Grit n Grace Girls . com / episode36](http://GritnGraceGirls.com/episode36) where you'll find this week's Digging Deeper download **AND** the transcript of today's podcast **AND** a link for you to join the conversation on our Grit 'n' Grace Girls Facebook page.

Amy

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #36 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules! Join us next week, when we'll be talking with Emily Freeman about the surprising enormity of being small.

Cheri

For today, **grow your grit ... embrace God's grace ...** and when you run across a bad rule, go right on ahead and

Cheri & Amy

BREAK IT!