

***Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules***  
Episode #64: How to Create Change That Lasts

**Amy:**  
Alright?

**Cheri:**  
Alright. There we go.

**Amy:**  
Is it doing anything funky?

**Cheri:**  
Wait. I can hear you. You can hear me. What went wrong?

<Laughter>

What's going to explode suddenly?

**Amy:**  
Everything is working!

**Cheri:**  
Oh, you had to say that out loud didn't you?

**Amy:**  
Oh gosh. Maybe it was that Skype update that helped. I don't know. We'll see.

**Cheri:**  
Were you the kind of kid who believed in jinxes when you were younger? Like did you avoid stepping on concrete cracks and stuff like that?

**Amy:**  
I will say, I've *never* stepped on a crack because I did not want to break my momma's back.

**Cheri:**  
How did I know this about you without actually knowing it?

**Amy:**  
Well, and, I attended this elementary school that had all these separate buildings that were connected by covered sidewalks and we would, it drove our teachers crazy, we'd walk in a line and jump and hit the supports of the covered sidewalk. So I'm not stepping on cracks, and I have to get every support. It was...

**Cheri:**

Every one. Every single one.

**Amy:**

Our teachers must have just, "Ah!"

**Cheri:**

Well, this is Cheri Gregory...

**Amy:**

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

**Cheri:**

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

**Amy:**

Today, we're reflecting on what we learned from our conversation with Chrystal Evans Hurst, author of *She's Still There: Rescuing the Girl in You*.

**Cheri:**

I had so much fun relistening to our conversation with Chrystal. I wanted Lynn Cowell to adopt me and be my mother. With Chrystal, I just want her to be my big sister and to just spend time pouring her wisdom into my life and reminding me of these things that I have forgotten.

**Amy:**

Yes. Well, the thing that struck me as I relistened was that, not only is she wise, but she speaks with so much authority. That comforts me. I'm like, "She believes what she's talking about and so do I." It's worth listening to twice, listeners.

**Cheri:**

I've been wondering why...what was it about her, at least for me, that gave her such authority to speak into my life, and for me, it was that Hersey bar with almond story. She has this entire chapter in which she talks about driving down the road and wanting the Hersey bar with almonds that is in her purse. But it's just out of reach, and she goes through and just stretches this story in slo-mo about how she knows better than to reach for something while driving, but she just rationalizes why it's okay to do it this time, this way. As I read it I was like, "I've been there." She's in my head. This is scary! She takes such a simple, every day, ordinary situation, like; all of us have our own version of a Hersey bar with almonds if you know what I mean...

**Amy:**

Oh yes.

**Cheri:**

And because she was sympathetic, empathetic, and convicting altogether, when I got to the end of that chapter, I was like, she knows me. She gets me. She has the right to speak into my life from here on in the book.

**Amy:**

Absolutely. She's a girlfriend. She's just a girlfriend with authority. Love it! Great combo.

**Cheri:**

Well, you mentioned that she talks about the process. Why was that such an important takeaway for you?

**Amy:**

Process is so counterintuitive to reforming perfectionists, because if it's perfect, then you should be able to attain it instantly, overnight, because you do it right. Just even her analogy of making your way to the mailbox that it doesn't matter if you take long strides or baby steps. You're still moving towards the mailbox and that image has really captured my imagination. Even though, like you said about her, it's a very every day image, but I will think of it every time I walk to my mailbox because real progress does not happen overnight. And what we have to do is embrace, what Lysa Terkeurst calls "imperfect progress." It may be very slow, there may be some steps backward, but nevertheless, it is forward movement. The place that I see this the most is my weight journey. So let's just...

**Cheri:**

Oh! We're getting honest! We're going to a whole new level, Amy. Okay. I'm here for you. I'm here for you.

**Amy:**

I like to describe myself as fluffy. I prefer that to fat or even chubby. But let's just say that I have done the yo-yo dieting thing, and I am currently at the lower end of the scale, which I am very proud of. It's taken a lot of hard work.

**Cheri:**

Fit by fifty!

**Amy:**

Fit by fifty- hashtag, for sure. But... a couple things: I did a little reading one day about setting goals. And this author, who is a brain scientist, says that we shouldn't publish our goals before we meet them, because it tricks our brain into thinking we've already done it. Which is really fascinating to me. So I have been using the hashtag #fitbyfifty and telling a little bit here and there about my progress, but not a lot. Because ...I didn't want to trick my brain into thinking I'm already there because I'm not quite there yet, but I have been making progress. Here's where I was trying to make some application with my weight: it's happened very slowly, but I'm hoping that the slowness of it contributes to the permanence of it.

**Cheri:**

Mm.

**Amy:**

Because my problem has been...I can lose weight. I have proved it about ten times. I know how to lose weight. What I *don't* know how to do is keep it off. So I'm hoping that the slowness of it, that the intentionality of it, will contribute to the permanence of the change. And I'm also realizing that when I get there, to maintain the change is going to be as hard of work as creating the change. And I think all of those ideas fit into any kind of change that we're trying to create in our lives.

**Cheri:**

You know, you're making me think of a conversation I had with Michele Cushatt yesterday. She and I are both working on learning to embrace the process and not go for the quick fix. Which those of us who are recovering perfectionists, you know, we get the bee in our bonnet; we get the bit in our teeth. (How many more clichés can I think of?) But, once we want to, and we know the goal, then we want it to have happened yesterday, because, of course, we want to achieve perfection as quickly as possible. And I got an email from an organization that does these amazing series of retreats for teachers. And I almost went to sign up for it even though on two of the dates. (It's a series of 5 retreats, and you're supposed to go to all of them.) For two of them, I'm already booked to be speaking, and I was like, "Well, I'll just sign up and figure it out later." And I'm like, "Okay, Cheri, you're thinking like a mad woman again. What is this about?" And I so rarely ask that. I go forward and rush into things, and I realized in conversation with Michele, that it was about belonging. It was about wanting to be part of this small group fellowship and in the process of discussing that with her, I realized I've done this all my life. The reason I join things, the reason I sign up for things, is I want that quick result. I want to bond immediately. I want to find a new group of BFFs, and it shortcuts the real process, the long process, of actually making long-term friendships, which is so much more mundane. And you said something earlier that I did not like at all. You said, "There's even some steps backward." Uh, uh; uh uh. That's just crazy talk!

**Amy:**

Yeah, I struggle with that too. Those are the days that you can get really bogged down into failure and two-steps backward can become ten if you're not careful.

**Cheri:**

One of the things I've been so fascinated by is the brain research that tells us that really all change is a process. And I used to get so discouraged if I wasn't seeing the results I would consider valid as quickly as possible. And I think it's the book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, talks about the fact that there are measurable changes in our brain even before there is external evidence that we have changed any habits. And basically, it says that if we aren't aware of that, we give up too soon. And so, I have found that really encouraging that when I'm doing my best, and I'm trying to make those processes, the day-in and day-out small changes. If I'm not seeing the end result, the external result that I want, I remind myself okay, but my brain is changing. There are measurable changes happening in my brain that will show up in the outside evidence, eventually.

**Amy:**

That is encouraging. It makes me think back to that picture that we talk about, sometimes, of a tree during the winter. That it looks dormant, that there are no leaves, there's no evidence of life, and yet, before the leaves ever appear, the sap starts flowing within the tree, and there's a lot happening inside the tree before there's ever leaves or flowers, the external fruit. And so that's encouraging that brain science backs up, that's us too. That we might look like the winter tree, but spring is a coming.

**Cheri:**

This also flies in the face of our *Pinterest culture* where, what are we celebrating? We're celebrating end results when what we need to celebrate in ourselves is the process, taking the next most faithful step. And I suppose that's kind of where the *grit* comes in, because it's so much more fun to do the "Ta-da! I made it. I did it. I got the result I wanted." When, really, the celebration should be, "I did it today. I did it the next day." You know, whatever the *it* is, for whatever the process we're in, that's the real celebration, is sticking with the process, especially when it gets hard. That's the *grit* for us recovering perfectionists.

**Amy:**

Absolutely. And Chrystal really reinforces that process, it sounds like, in the structure of her book that she starts with the internal. So, that's fantastic.

**Cheri:**

I was really taken by Chrystal's title: *She's Still There*. There's just something in that, and her description of going back and finding the girl that's still within us. And she reminded me of a poem I wrote a number of years ago. It was just as I was starting to make the conscious break from perfectionism. And I realized, I kind of made an unconscious decision. I was probably 5 at the time, I had to choose...I could be myself, or I could be loved. And of course when you're little, the worst thing in the world would be to not be loved. And so I chose to do whatever it took to feel like I was being loved. But now looking back, I realized...I'm not going to say it was the wrong choice, but I grieve that choice. Because what it means is that I left my truest self. I left a little girl who was really me behind. I wrote this poem basically apologizing to her for abandoning her way back there. And choosing what felt like love or what I was hoping would be love, but the problem is when we go through our lives acting like somebody that isn't our true authentic self, the love that we're given isn't going to stick. It's not going to fit, because I kind of think of love as being something that's custom fit. It only stays if it's for our truest self, rather than the façade or the mask or the version of, you know, who does this teacher want me to be, who does this parent want me to be, who does this friend want me to be? This whole idea of now at fifty looking back and saying, "She's still there." On the one hand it's sad, and on the other hand it is so exciting, that we can still go back and find her, that she is in fact still there.

**Amy:**

I think that's amazing. And as I reflect on you saying that you did this at five, maybe some of our audience members will connect with that and some of you won't. So what I was thinking, I don't think I did it until I was probably close to the end of my twenties and it was

really terrible in my thirties. And I started thinking, “What caused me to throw a blanket over that little girl, put her in hiding, and try to create my own image?” I think it was kind of a perfect storm of things. It was mothering, which we’ve talked about on this show, that it is, that’s one of those things where you start with these great intentions, ‘cause it’s so important to you, but then you cross this line that is not healthy. So it was mothering. It was — we moved to my husband’s hometown. And this is nobody’s fault but my own, but moving to a place where he already had an identity. And his parents, who are wonderful, but they lived there, too, and they had an identity. It was like I tried. No fault of theirs. I tried to shove myself into a mold that would fit their family identity in this town. And then, the other thing that happened was I became a women’s ministry director. And that was a total God thing, and yet, I think that my perfectionistic bent then thought, “Okay, well now, I really need to look like the perfect Christian woman because I have this job.”

**Cheri:**

You had a “role.”

**Amy:**

Yes, a role.

**Cheri:**

A mantel to carry.

**Amy:**

Yes, to perform. Right, a role a to “perform,” in quotation marks, and it was a perfect storm of all those things that I think created later in life for me. I grew up in such a nurturing, loving household that I did feel affirmed in being myself, but then I did it to myself later in my life. So it was different timing that led to the same experience, I think, in our lives.

**Cheri:**

Well, and I love that Chrystal said that, “Where did she go?” is a question that we can ask over and over at different seasons of our life. The all or nothing brain of a perfectionist is like, “Well, I’ve never asked it, so I can’t ask now.” No, we can ask it when we’re teenagers, we can ask it in our early twenties, we can ask it when we get married, first child, second child, basically any life transition. To say, “Where is she in all of this?” Would be a great question to ask.

**Amy:**

Well, okay Cheri, so let me ask you, so who is *she* for you in all of this? There’s so much grace in that. So I’ll ask you, who is *she* that you are rescuing. I love the word rescuing.

**Cheri:**

I do too! You know there’s a picture of me, and I’ll share it for the blog post for this episode. There is a picture of me with stick straight, platinum blonde hair, and I’m probably four or five in the picture, and I’ve got my little hands to my cheeks like this, and I’ve got this big smile and big, bright eyes and my head’s just a little to one side, and I just see so much joy and mischief and fun and anticipation, and there’s a little bit of reticence. There’s this

little...I'm probably the only one who would see, but just so much, and I'm gonna use *expectation* but not in the way that us perfectionists expect things; It's just like "everything is gonna be wonderful," and I remember how much I loved to laugh and be silly. Silly, oh my gosh, you're going to think I'm insane, but when I was really little, too little for this to be inappropriate, I had my little friends over, and we did this little skit where they literally scared the clothes off me. Like, I put my clothes on so that when my little friend screamed, I let go and my clothes fell off. We fell on the floor laughing our fool heads off and that's who *she* is for me. And somehow along the way of course, I probably got in trouble for not having clothes on when I was supposed to...

**Amy:**

Yeah, nakedness is discouraged.

**Cheri:**

And so, I'm not saying I want to do that. Let's be really clear. I'm not saying I want to become a stripper. Do not make that the takeaway for this episode; that would be really problematic. But there's something about the freedom and the spontaneity, that's the word I'm looking for. She was utterly spontaneous. And that is long gone. You should see my schedules. That spon- you know what I say, I like my spontaneity very carefully planned, thank you.

**Amy:**

I love it!

**Cheri:**

How about you? Who is *she* for you?

**Amy:**

She is the girl that loved everybody wide open and really believed everybody would love me back. And was a little quirky but wasn't ashamed of the quirky, in fact, sort of proud of the quirky. Its funny because I have a niece that is my mini me. So I have no daughters, but I have, I'm counting them, I have 6 nieces and Rebekah who has my middle name, she's Rebekah Michelle. And Rebekah Michelle is my mini me. And whenever I'm around Rebekah, I'm like, oh my heavens, not only does she look like me, she could pass as my daughter, but she acts like the young me. And it brings tears to my eyes because she reminds me of who I was when I was little. And Rebekah is very confidant, and she's a little quirky, and she's a huge reader. It's just so much of who I was and am and so, yeah.

**Cheri:**

She really is still there. Like, right there.

**Amy:**

She is. I mean we're different too, but she is a physical representation of who I want to reconnect with and rescue.

**Cheri:**

We talked earlier about how the *grit* in all of this is committing to the process, the day-in and the day-out, that requires *grit*. Especially for those of us who want things one and done. And I just feel so much grace now towards both of us and those little girls that we can revive, and we can rescue. They're still there for both of us and to recognize that it's not too late to bring the qualities of our truest selves into our everyday lives. I was gonna say even at fifty, but let's make that, *especially* at fifty.

**Amy:**  
Especially!

**Cheri:**  
'Cause you said "Fifty? Better than ever!" I like that. That's like, my motto: better than ever. So what do you think was a bad rule that we can pull out of our conversation with Chrystal?

**Amy:**  
The bad rule is "real progress is fast progress." I think we nullify every any thing except fast. And I think we need to acknowledge real progress is any progress.

**Cheri:**  
First of all, I love that you used the word *nullify*. So I just want to give you serious props, because that's a great word.

**Amy:**  
Oh see, that's part of my little girl. I love geeky words.

**Cheri:**  
And that's one reason we're friends. You know, we would've been great playmates when we were younger. Wouldn't we?

**Amy:**  
It's true.

**Cheri:**  
We would've been such fun playmates.

**Amy:**  
We would've driven our moms crazy, but we would've had a good time together.

**Cheri:**  
Your mom probably would've sent me home for, you know, having my clothes fall off at inappropriate times. What's the fact that we can focus on?

**Amy:**  
"Any step forward is progress."

**Cheri:**



Say that again. We all need to hear it.

**Amy:**

Any step forward is progress.

**Cheri:**

And it's nice when the people around us affirm that, but if they don't, then we're gonna have to be the ones who assure the little girl who is still there, that, yes, whatever progress she's making counts as progress.

And I loved, I loved the scripture that you selected.

**Amy:**

It's Isaiah 43:19 that says, "See, I'm doing a new thing. Now, it springs up. Do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

It's just such a picture of God's goodness and abundance and how He — we may feel like we're living in a wasteland. I know I've had periods of life that I feel like it was a wasteland. And God just says, "Look up. I want to do a new thing. Do you not perceive it?" He's, like, I'm at work. I'm doing something internally. Don't discount it."

**Cheri:**

Head over to [GritNGraceGirls .com/episode64](http://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode64).

**Amy:**

You'll find links to this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

**Cheri:**

If you haven't yet received your 12 printable Permission Slips to help you learn how to break bad rules, you can sign up for them while you're there.

**Amy:**

Be sure to join us next week, when we'll be talking with Tricia Lott Williford, author of ***You Can Do This***.

**Cheri:**

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

**Amy 'n' Cheri:**

**BREAK IT!**

**Outtakes**

**Cheri:**

You know the description you wrote for this one, including the word naked. Was that absolutely necessary?

**Amy:**

Well, I really thought it might need to be edited out, seriously, like —

**Cheri:**

No. Not in the least, no!

**Amy:**

I wrote a devotion for a proverb one time early on that was totally rejected. It wasn't just edited. It was jettisoned, and it was rooted in a dream that I had that I showed up at church with no clothes on. They were like nobody needs to imagine you naked during their quiet time.

<Laughter>

I was like, "Oh, that's the truth."

**Cheri:**

Okay, I'm dying.