

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #116: How to Stop Trying Harder and Start Living Better

Cheri

Let's talk about do overs, second chances, old dogs learning ... No, let's not use that metaphor. Basically, some way that you've learned that it is never too late to change.

Amy

Well, I am going through a new round. I hope it could be considered leveling up, of taming my tongue. I thought I had arrived, ha ha. No, I thought I was doing a lot better. I'm just dealing with some issues right now that are, they amp up my passion, and that's not a bad thing. But my passion tends to turn into fleshly words really, really fast. So, I'm trying to learn how to channel the passion and tame the words. How about you?

Cheri

Well, this is something I've actually learned from you. Because one of my very defeatist beliefs from the past is that once I've said something, or once a conversation has gone poorly, then that's it. You don't revisit it, I messed up, and that was it. You have taught me this wonderful phrase, circling back around. It's very inviting. It's, "Hey, can I circle back around, and can we revisit?" Just because things didn't go too well, doesn't mean it's done forever. I can ask for a second chance, I can give myself a second chance. That's really been flying in the face of my old perfectionist belief that if I messed up, it's forever.

Amy

Oh, I love that. I love that. Well, change is possible. We heard this from one of our listeners, she says, "I never consider myself a perfectionist or people pleaser. However, after reading *The Cure For The Perfect Life*, I would say that there are many areas of my life where I've been trying hard to receive acceptance from people who are unsafe and don't deserve to criticize me. You know, you can't change others; you can only change yourself. So, I've spent years trying to better and change myself based on others feedback, comments, et cetera. But I've moved on and, I found my voice. I have begun setting boundaries that I didn't before. Just this week, I even requested an apology from a person who emotionally exploded on me for simply delivering a message. It's so freeing to set a boundary. In the past, I would have tried to kill them with kindness and ignore the abuse, but not anymore. It's so awesome." Well, yay you. Cheri and I are with you and excited. Change is possible. And I love hearing how Cheri and Kathi's wonderful book has helped another reader find a better way to live.

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, the podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy

Today we're talking with Kathi Lipp, co-author of *You Don't Have To Try So Hard-Ditch Expectations And Live Your Own Best Life*. Kathi's a national speaker and author of 17 books including, *Overwhelmed*, *Clutter Free*, *The Get Yourself Organized Project*, and *The Husband Project*. She's a frequent guest on radio and TV and has been named the *Focus on the Family* radio's *Best of Broadcast*. She's the host of the popular podcast, *Clutter Free Academy with Kathy Lipp*, and runs the *Clutter Free Academy* Facebook group, *The Safest Spot On The Internet*. Today in a full twist, I'm just taking over all the way. I'm also interviewing Cheri Gregory, Kathi's co-author.

So, you two, give us the scoop on *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*.

Kathi

Well, this is a republishing of our book, *The Cure For The Perfect Life*, that came out several years ago. It's very exciting to have a book get a second chance at life. We've always called it CPL, but now it's been given CPR. Now, we can revise, it's just exciting that people love the content so much that they wanted to see it continue. So, that makes me really happy.

Cheri

Yeah, for me it's just amazing because this was my very first book and to get a second chance is rare. If a book doesn't do quite as well as a publisher was hoping, usually it just goes away.

Kathi

I have many of those. I have many examples, do you want to talk ... No, we won't, okay.

Amy

When you look back at writing the original version of the book, what do you remember struggling with the most, and what's been fun to fix about this one?

Kathi

Okay, is Dropbox the right answer? I'm sorry. I just have to say, the technical issues on this book were insane. I felt like I was crazy. I am not the recovering raging perfectionist of this team.

Cheri

So, who would that be?

Kathi

We just call it as we see it around here. But I also think just understanding who our audience was, was a huge thing. Because somebody who read this book not only had to struggle with perfectionism, but also had to see it as something that they wanted to change about themselves. Not everybody does. For a true perfectionist, what they want is they want the world to change. This is somebody who says, I've tried to make the world change. Funny, nobody's listening to me.

Amy

Right, I'm not the problem.

Kathi

I'm not the problem. But these are people who were humble enough to say, maybe this is an issue and maybe the control I need to exert is not over others. It's over myself.

Cheri

That's a good observation. I remember the Dropbox problems. I almost forgot those. And that's more your people pleasing. Kathi is more of a people pleaser than a classical perfectionist, and she kept feeling like she was letting me down because she couldn't find files. The thing I remember the most is that I was so in awe of Kathi back then.

Kathi

I love the past tense. It's awesome.

<Laughter>

Cheri

That I just assumed she knew everything. She knew everything there was to know about book writing, and that I would just sit and wait, and she would tell me what to do. And then I would work really, really hard and make sure that I produced perfect chapters that would not ruin her publishing career. I remember that we would get together and she would say, "Oh, we need an outline for the chapter." I would think to myself, we've outlined it before, but she must not like that outline, and so we're doing a new outline. Funny thing, they all looked a lot alike, and I finally learned Kathi lives completely in the moment. So, had I said, "Kathi, how about the outline we put together last month?" She probably would have said, "Oh, yeah, let's use that one." But I thought there was like this deep strategy for redeveloping ... She's laughing, I love it.

Amy

I'm all time laughing.

Kathi

What's funny is whether my spring is strategic, but I have to remember what the plan was in order to execute it. And that people are going to think I have a severe disability as we talk about this. But you know what, to me, the outlines were in Cheri's bucket. So, if it's not in my bucket, it's not my thing. I'm not trying to use excuses, but if anybody thought, wouldn't it be fun to

write a book with Kathy? No, it's really, really not. I try not to be a princess or a prima donna or make my problem somebody else's. But sometimes, I don't know I'm doing it.

Amy

Nobody believes that! We all want to write a book with you, Kathi. Here's the thing that I want to clarify is, Kathi, neither of these two are ditzzy. It's just that they both have so many things that they're good at that they're spinning a lot of plates. That's all.

Cheri

But I think what we both learned in the writing of the first version of this book is we really don't have to try so hard. The illusions fell away. I'm like, "Oh, Kathi needs me to remember things. I can do that, and Kathi doesn't know everything about publishing, okay." It actually made it so that the next book we worked on together was a lot easier, I think.

Amy

How did you decide what to change between the original and the re-release? Tell us about the manuscript development team.

Cheri

Well, we did get together a group of women who had read *The Cure For The Perfect Life*, and loved it. And we said, have at it. Please reread it a chunk at a time and tell us what needs to go. I discovered very quickly as I was getting the feedback that large portions that I had written ... I have joked that the original book was written by my evil twins over and over. I have put it in every piece of research. I put in every definition. I quoted. We had stories from 12 other people. It was a kitchen sink book, because I didn't feel like what I had to offer by myself. I felt like Kathi was Kathi, and I needed to bring myself and everything else along with it. What we ended up cutting out, because the manuscript redevelopment team said they thought it should go, is anything that wasn't just me or Kathi. From my perspective, it was like, "Wow, you really think I'm enough?" Then there was one really honest reader, who said the original book changed her life.

Kathi

Tanya Kubo.

Cheri

Yes, shout out to Tanya. She emailed me this amazing email that said, "When I read the stories in *The Cure For The Perfect Life*, I don't like you." I needed to hear that. And then...

Kathi

You guys have to see Amy's face.

Amy

I just did the shocked face. It was the wow emoji.

Kathi

Tanya could say that because she adores Cheri in real life.

Cheri

It was the best feedback. 'Cause what she also did then as she compared some of the stories in *The Cure For The Perfect Life* to stories in which she did sympathize with me in *Overwhelmed*, which is the second book Kathy and I wrote together. She was able to help me see ... I was overly confessional in the original version of this book. I just poured out all the things I'd ever done wrong, and there was no redemption to it. It was just kind of catharsis. All of that got removed from the book, because it wasn't serving the reader. It wasn't helpful. Then Kathi, you want to say anything about learning to receive feedback, because that's something we both had made a lot of progress on.

Kathi

My number one strength is positivity. I also had to learn that I need to receive feedback in a very structured way. It's after a speaking engagement, too. Here's a perfect example. I was at the Christian Comedian Conference. I bombed, let's just be clear, I bombed.

Amy

I can't imagine.

Kathi

What they do is they have coaches who give you feedback live, and then people from the audience can write things down and hand it to you. So, I took anything that was handed to me, and I handed it directly to Roger.

Cheri

Good for you!

I didn't even look at it, and he went through it. He goes, "No, these are all fine. You can read them." But here's what I've come to understand. I carefully consider giving calculated feedback that will make sure that I am lifting somebody up. Not everybody is that careful. Feedback, when you're in a hurting place, when you're in a soft place, a tender place can stop you in your tracks. So, one of the things that I've had to learn, and I'm trying to teach my team and Cheri and I have talked about, is how do you give feedback that keeps people going while still telling the truth?

Amy

Oh gosh, that's great.

Kathi

Here's the thing I've heard. So many organizations are into slay them and lay them. If you can't take the feedback, well, then you probably don't need to be a part of what we're doing here.

That's not growth. That's survival of the fittest. You'll get the 1% who have the thickest skin but you'll miss the people who can bring the comedy, and the art, and the beauty to a process. It doesn't mean you lie to people. It doesn't mean you don't tell the truth. But it's you tell the truth, but you always, always, always do it with love. If you're getting feedback from people who have not been trained well in that, then you give the feedback to somebody else, let them filter it, especially somebody you live with. Because they're going to say, "I have to come home to this person. Let's make sure that this is healthy feedback."

Amy

Such great advice in every day life, not just writing a book or standing on stage and letting people heckle you, oh my gosh, that is so brave.

Kathi

Parenting. This is a good piece of advice for parenting. How do I give my kids feedback without crushing who they are, to encourage them to keep going? It's about saying I see this in you. I see this in you. There's something getting in the way of others being able to see this greatness in you. Can we talk about that?

Amy

Very good. That is wonderful. Well, and friendships and all kinds of things, it's amazing. In *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*, you two talk about the Four P bullies. Those bullies are *perfectionism, people pleasing, performancism, procrastination*. Let's go through them one by one, and you guys talk to us about how do these beliefs show up in the everyday lives of women. Start with perfectionism, how does that show up?

Kathi

Well, that's just the overarching, hey; everybody fits into this category title, perfectionism. I think perfectionism, the way it has reared its ugly head in my life, is it's kept me from doing things because I've seen other people do them better. Amy Carroll is already a speaker coach, why would I ever do that, because she's already so good at it. Or, Cheri Gregory is so great at coaching people in writing, I have no business dipping my toe in that, or my husband makes great salsa, why would I even try? It's like when you say it to somebody else, it sounds ridiculous. But in your head, it's totally legit. For other people, it's like, if I can't do it perfectly, I'm not going to do it at all. I've been there, too. But for me, it's really more about why would I do it when other people can do it so much better than me? It doesn't allow room for grace or growth. Growth and grace are the messiest areas we can be in. It never looks pretty. It's never linear. It's always a hot mess. But we have to engage in the mess in order to do the things that are worthwhile.

Amy

Well, and for those people that are listening that go, "Oh, I'm not a perfectionist." I want to repeat what Kathi says, is that we're pretty much all pocket perfectionists. You might not have the perfect house, or you might not think your kids have to be perfect, but I bet every woman listening can think of some area of her life that she's very, let's just say particular.

Cheri

That's probably for me where perfectionism, really, I'm learning to dial down is for the longest time I did not know what the phrase good enough meant. To me, it was a cuss word and only slackers settled for good enough. Now, of course, I had my own areas and I think that's where it gets confusing is everybody has their own area, whether it's their housekeeping or their cooking or whatever it might be. I've had a lot of people say, "I'm not a perfectionist because," And they give me one small piece of evidence. But oh my goodness, probably the best way to find out if you're a perfectionist is ask the people around you. Just say it.

Amy

Okay, so let's go the next P, people pleasing. How does that show up?

Kathi

This is probably my toughest one that I still struggle with. I've come to find out, it's mostly in friendships. I am not great at boundaries; I'm not great at speaking up for myself. So, what ends up happening is I people please, people please, people please, and then I have to dump people. And they're like, "Well, I always thought that we were such good friends, what happened?" Because I didn't set good boundaries, it's on me because I wasn't able to have the small conversations. So I had to go from not protecting myself to fully protecting myself.

Cheri

That's so hard. My people pleasing shows up in waiting for the right time to have the hard conversation. The people I need to have hard conversations with never have the right time. I'm not saying it's their fault, they're just ... one of us is always in a crisis, or we're busy, and I keep waiting and waiting. I still haven't learned the lesson, but my boss, when he knows there's a problem, he addresses it often within 60 minutes. He will drop whatever he's doing and have the hard conversation immediately because it's the easiest it will ever be. And, ohhh, I'm still learning, but you know, when we first wrote this book, I probably didn't even recognize any of this. I still thought people pleasing was something that was next to godliness. I know differently now.

Amy

That's great insight. How about performancism? First of all, I think I need a definition for you guys. What's performancism, and how does it show up?

Kathi

I would say performancism is that you get your value from what you do. I was very bad in my relationships with Cheri early on, because I always said she was the hardest working speaker I'd ever met. I thought that was a huge compliment. Come to find out, probably younger Cheri would have taken that as a compliment, but mature wise, wonderful Cheri is like, but I want to be the hardest working speaker. What I've also come to understand is that we think that if I was just a better person. If I just did more. Let me be clear, if I just lost the weight, if I just looked a different way, if I just got the book contract, finally, people would accept me. I've done all of

those things, and I've done the reverse of all those things, and it honestly doesn't make a difference. It really doesn't. I posted something recently about ... Just in a raw, honest moment about feeling left out or something. One of my friends said she had finally published her book and she's done an amazing job, and she says ... I can't remember the exact words Cheri, maybe you can help me. She's just now in a bigger pool of people that she doesn't belong to.

Cheri

She's just now a smaller fish in an even bigger pool. Yes.

Amy

Yeah, we'll give a shout out. That was Diane Kim. Her interview with us was probably one of the best received, and her book is amazing.

Kathi

It is amazing.

Cheri

Of course, you and I have been friends for over a decade now. So, there's a pivot point there. I used to take being the hardest working speaker as a huge compliment. And then you've been with me as that has morphed. I think the other thing that's interesting here is in our collaboration, sometimes I produce things that are more tangible, and you have felt like you weren't working enough. But you build relationships, and we can't measure those. They are worth so much. But I think sometimes you haven't realized that you performed as much as I did. I think part of performancism is trying to measure up and weigh and balance who's doing more, and who's doing enough and all that kind of stuff. Rather than just saying, "Look, I'm going to do the best I can. I'm going to follow as God leads." And letting that be enough rather than having all the voices measuring and deciding whether we've done what we're supposed to, because it's never ending.

Amy

Oh, I teared up several times during that little portion there. That is heart piercing good stuff. So, the last one, procrastination, how does this show up?

Kathi

I think that we have this faulty thinking that there will always be a better time. I just read something recently that was so interesting. We say we don't have time for something right now, something that is not urgent and not important. But then we end up putting it on our calendar for a month out anyway. Because, wow, the end of September is going to be so much better than it is right now. It never is, and we're just going to regret that we put that on there. I think procrastination is fear, guilt, and shame all rolled up into one. This is something that I have worked so hard on, and here's the interesting thing, when you go from being a procrastinator to somebody who plans ahead, people rebel. I'm learning this. They complain when you're behind, but they rebel when you're on time, because you've always been their good excuse. Humans are the funniest people, we just are.

Amy

We are whacked, aren't we?

This has been shocking to me, shocking that I'm not the only one who procrastinated. Why should this be such a revelation to me? I've spent my whole life thinking that I've held people back, and just to come to find out, this is so universal. This is why dinner is a panic every night for so many people. I think that this is where ... I'll talk about overwhelm for a second, where micro steps is the best thing ever. Where we talk about, don't break it down into baby steps, break it down into micro steps, where it's like, you don't have to plan your meal, you just have to say, "I'm deciding that I'm going to plan meals." I don't have to do a week's worth of meals, I just have to figure out what I'm doing tonight. You don't have to buy the program or put it up on the Trello board. You just have to play on the back of an envelope and say, "We're going to have tacos tonight." Here's the beautiful thing, if you don't have the stuff for tacos, at least you figured that out. And now you can go to the next best decision. We don't have the stuff for tacos, okay. But we do have the stuff for quesadillas. So, that's what we're having tonight. It's just these little, tiny decisions along the way that will help get you unstuck, because procrastination is the biggest form of stuck.

Cheri

I'll totally piggyback on that because if there's anything I'm finding myself doing differently now, because I was a terrible procrastinator. I don't think Kathy knew it. I don't think I confessed to it. I'm discovering that those micro steps of just getting started, especially if it's a creative project, just getting started opens the door to the Holy Spirit, to the song lyric, to the Bible chapter that I'm studying to the conversation with a friend. Suddenly, everything starts coming together and the momentum builds. But if I don't start, if I'm like, "Oh, dear, it's too scary. I don't know what I'm doing thus I can't start it." It's like no, if I don't know what I'm doing, that's the best time to take that first little tiny micro step and just crack the door open and be a blank page and be open. It's been astonishing to see how many things are just starting to slowly move forward, because I finally got started instead of waiting for the perfect time to start.

Amy

So good. Let me ask you one at a time, Kathi first, what's something important that you learned after the original book was published?

Kathi

Oh wow! People pleasing has kept me from some amazing relationships, because I haven't had the room to invest in them, because I've been so busy maintaining half friendships.

Amy

We can all just sit right there for a moment. I think a lot of us can identify with that Kathy.

Kathi

But what excites me is that I don't have to miss out on it anymore. I hope that people get free at 30, not 50, but I'll take it whenever I got it. At 50, I want to care for people, and I feel overwhelmed by it. But there is a great quote, do for one what you wish you could do for many. I would rather have one rich, amazing friendship, than 30 maintainings, to go deeper, to know each other heart to heart, to be the person who can say to somebody else, "I love you, I see better for you than what you're doing right now." Because that's the kind of relationship I want. To have that with a few select people and to invest more deeply in them means that people pleasing has to end. People pleasing has been toxic to me for most of my life, and I refused to let it be anymore. It's going to be hard. It means cutting out some relationships that I thought were significant.

Cheri

I just have to say, I'm really glad you're not looking at me right now. But I'm wondering if you're avoiding eye contact for a reason.

Kathi

Because you're one of the relationships that I want to continue going deeper with. Cheri and I are going to have rockers right next to each other at the retirement home.

Amy

I love that. I hope I can scoot in there somewhere, too.

Kathi

You know what, you are on my porch any time, Miss Amy.

Amy

How about you, you?

Cheri

It's going to be related. I wrote a blog post a few weeks ago, and the opening line was, I will no longer fight you for me. I had scribbled that on a notepad by my bedside late one night, and I woke up the next morning and I was like, what on earth does this even mean? The short story is I realized that my habit of trying to fix other people and change other people has been an attempt to get myself back from them. It's as if everybody's had a piece of me, like a puzzle piece, and if I can just change them, they'll give me the piece I need. And if I can change everybody all at the same time, they'll all give me back all the pieces and I can put myself back together again and I can be myself. I finally realized, actually, they don't all have pieces of me, and I'm not going to fight them. I can skip all of that work of trying to fix all the people, all at the same time and get them to all behave, and just be me. Like Kathi said, some will stick around and some won't. It's scary. But I'm at a very different place than I was when we wrote this book. Back then, Kathi was one of my only truly healthy friends. Now, I'm surrounded by a number of people, who for reasons I don't quite understand, but I'm very grateful for, keep calling out the best in me. I'm like, I could get used to this. I'm totally okay with this. And I don't think I'm sabotaging the friendships the way I used to. In the past, I would do these dumb love

tests, and I'd really screw something up and you'd have to completely really go through a huge forgiveness cycle. I'm like, I think I'm skipping that nowadays. So, realizing that other people don't hold our identities, that that's something God has given us. It's a gift that we received from Him and nobody else.

Amy

I think this is so revolutionary. I feel it. I hope everybody that's listening feels it, to know that the people that are writing books, these amazing authors, still so in process, so much in change, and the writing is part of the change. That's the amazing thing. Kathi, tell us about the book club that you have going on.

Kathi

So, excited. As many of you know, I am one of the leaders of *Clutter Free Academy* this amazing Facebook group. We call it *The Kindest Place On The Internet*, which it really is. We have thousands of women in there who are going to be going through, *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*. We're going to be doing a book club, a book study. Cheri and I will be in there doing videos and Facebook Lives to talk to you guys, and bring you along in this process. So, we could not be more thrilled that this is happening. It's going to be starting September 10. It's a Monday. Get your books before then, we're going to go through it together. This is going to be the most powerful way to go through the book. I am convinced of it, because not only will you get everything that's in the book, you'll get everything that we've learned since the book. Plus, you'll get to experience all the revelations of the women who are going through it. So, if you want to join Clutter Free Academy just for the book club, you can leave afterwards. I won't cry, I promise. It's an amazing group. And I think that there's a lot of women in there who have very tender hearts who are open to growing and to change, and that's the kind of group you want to be in.

Cheri

Is this only for people who have physical clutter in their homes?

Kathi

You know what, let's be honest, we delve down into the physical clutter. This is a big part of what we do. But this is also for the people who are just feeling overwhelmed with any aspect of their lives. Most of the time, that manifests itself with clutter. We also have challenges in there like planning your meals ahead, like what we just talked about. To not say it has to be perfect, to just get it down on paper. I'm talking about getting routines in your life. Really, all of this, that Facebook group is so much about my book *Clutter Free*, our book, *Overwhelmed*, and *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*. All the principles are in there. It's a fascinating, and it's a growing and a healthy place to be. It's really amazing.

Amy

As we wrap up, each of you share a little something that will encourage our listeners as we go.

Kathi

You know what, I love the title of this book because it's so true. When we settle in, not settle, but settle in to who God has created us to be, we do not have to try so hard with other people. It really is such a wonderful way of saying, God loves me exactly where I am, and that does not change. I don't have to keep figuring out new ways to make God love me more. We cannot supersede the mind of God. He loves us so exquisitely, He cherishes us exactly where we are. And there's nothing we can do, there's nothing we can say that would ever change His love for us.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com\Episode 116.

Amy

There, you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, the Bible verse art, and you'll get some instructions about how to enter to win this week's giveaway of *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*.

Cheri

We are having a blast sharing behind the scenes fun stuff with our Grit-n-Grace Growth Partners. You can learn more at [patreon.com\gritngracegirls](http://patreon.com/gritngracegirls). We would love to have you join our team.

Amy

Next week, we'll be talking with Crystal Stine, author of *Holy Hustle*, so make sure you join us.

Cheri

For today, grow your grit, embrace God's grace. When you run across a bad rule, you know what to do, go right on ahead and...

Amy and Cheri

Break it!