

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST Episode #284

Made a Mistake?

How to Stop Self-Blaming & Start Receiving Grace

Have you ever felt crushed under the weight of a mistake, convinced it's too big to fix? Whether it's a literal mess or a relational misstep, we often respond by piling on guilt, shame, and endless self-blame. But what if there's another way?

In this episode, I share a story about a *literal* spill that led to a deep reflection on responsibility, self-blame, and the gift of grace. Together, we'll talk about how to figure out what's actually yours to own, how to stop beating yourself up for every little thing, and how to open your heart to God's grace – even in life's stickiest situations.

So if you're ready to stop over-owning every mess and start letting grace lead the way, this episode is for you!

[Intro music]

Welcome to *Grit 'n' Grace: The Podcast for Highly Sensitive Christian Women!*

I'm your host, Cheri Gregory.

Are you tired of the overthinking, overwhelm, and exhaustion that come with being a Highly Sensitive Person?

Are you ready to stop worrying that something's wrong with you and start understanding and nurturing yourself as an HSP?

Together, we'll build resilience, practice self-compassion, set healthy boundaries, unlock your creativity, and learn to embrace – not fight – your God-given sensitivity.

Let's dig in!

Hey friend, I'm so glad you could join me today!

We're gonna head to a fabulous cafe about 20 minutes from my house, in Capitola-by-the-Sea. It's a local favorite called Gayle's Bakery & Rotisserie, and they have so many fabulous options for breakfast.

Now, my favorite dish is their warm French toast strata with plenty of syrup. And their roasted rosemary potatoes are to die for. My only complaint is that they only give out those tiny packets of ketchup that squirt all over when you try to open them. But never fear, I keep a bottle of ketchup in the glove compartment for this very purpose. So if you decide on the rosemary potatoes or an egg dish like their biscuit scrambled egg sandwich or their Italian frittata, we're good to go!

So while we're waiting for our number to be called, I have a little story to tell you.

It's very new, and I'm still reflecting on it and pray-cessing it. So I'd love to hear any insights that rise to the surface for you.

Last weekend, when Daniel and I came here for brunch, I felt like eating something not so filling. So while he was ordering hot foods, I wandered over to the refrigerated options and picked up a yogurt parfait to check out the ingredients.

Now like many yogurt parfaits that are pre-packaged to go, this one was layers of fruit, yogurt, and granola in a clear plastic cup topped with a clear plastic lid. The front label clearly stated that the fruits were blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries. But I couldn't tell whether the yogurt was vanilla (which I'm okay with) or plain Greek yogurt (which I *love*). So I gently rotated the cup to see if there was a nutrition and ingredients label on the back.

Now, is this a good time to mention that I have incredibly slow reflexes? As in, I can drop a brand-new shampoo bottle and think to myself, “Wow, that’s really going to hurt by the time it hits my foot!” while also being utterly unable to move my foot in time?

Ok, so back to when I gently rotated the yogurt parfait cup to see if there was a nutrition and ingredients label on the back – or at least I *thought* I rotated it gently.

Because the next thing I knew, I was standing in front of the refrigerated case at Gayle’s Bakery & Rotisserie with nothing but a clear plastic lid in my hand.

I stared at that lid for what felt like hours, trying to figure out, “Where did the parfait go?” before I finally looked down and saw the answer: spread out *all* around me.

There were raspberries and strawberries and like, glops of yogurt spattered on the products on the bottom shelf of that refrigerated case. Blueberries had rolled in *every* possible direction. And the granola clearly multiplied as it fell, because there was so much more on the floor than would ever have fit inside that clear plastic cup, which was still about half full.

I must have gasped, because Daniel turned and called out, “Are you okay?” And I replied, “I’m really embarrassed, but that’s not fatal...” as I bent down and started picking up granola bits and berries one-by-one.

One of the workers walked up and graciously assured me, “Don’t worry about it. We’ll take care of it! We have a mop and bucket on the way.” And I fought the urge to insist that no, she had to let me clean it up, but I guessed there were probably some OSHA rules and I didn’t want to get in the way of her doing her job. Like, I’d already made her job harder; she didn’t need me creating even *more* work for her.

So I picked up the half-empty parfait cup that was on the floor, I snapped the lid back on it, and I rejoined Daniel. Holding up the parfait thing, I quipped, “You break, it you buy it!” – a rule we both knew by heart from our earliest childhood days.

But when it came time for us to pay for our food, our server refused to let us pay for the parfait that I had ruined. “Give it to me,” he said, “ I’ll throw it away. Go get yourself a new one. It’s okay.”

As we enjoyed our meal out on the patio, I was keenly aware of how grateful I felt toward the gracious treatment I’d received – for the grace I’d been shown.

And I realized that the rule I’d been raised with – “You break it, you buy it” – actually played a vital part in how I was feeling.

The deeper message was actually “You break it, you own it” – as in, you take ownership for what you’ve done, and you make it right.

So even though what I’d done was an accident, my **intent** did not alter my **impact**.

So my instinct was to clean up the mess I’d made, and to pay for the parfait I’d ruined, because I’d been taught to focus on and take responsibility for my impact.

The employees at Gayle’s, however, chose to elevate my **intent** and absorb the **impact**. Now they didn’t have to do that, and I certainly didn’t expect them to do that automatically; so when they did, it felt like a gift.

And we call that gift grace.

Which then got me wondering, and I posed this question to Daniel, “What if I *had* expected them to clean up after me? What if I’d just grabbed a fresh parfait, walked away from my mess, and acted like nothing had happened?”

What if I'd felt *entitled* to Gayle's absorbing the impact of my mistake? Would I have been able to experience grace?"

And Daniel shook his head and said "No, entitlement leaves no space for grace."

But then he paused and then added, "But if you had beaten yourself up endlessly for making a mess, you wouldn't have experienced grace, either."

Well, so much for patting myself on the back for owning my mistake rather than acting [gasp] *entitled!*

So, like I said, that happened a week ago. And I've been thinking about it ever since.

Partly because – like so many Highly Sensitive Persons – I'm still learning how to discharge strong emotions, like embarrassment, from my body.

And partly because I kept feeling strong waves of gratitude, and I really wanted to embrace them and feel them fully.

And there was something else I couldn't quite put my finger on until I started thinking about sharing this silly little story with you.

Now on the surface, it's kinda funny, in the, "Ha-ha-ha, I am so glad that happened to you, Cheri, and not to me!" kinda way.

And absolutely, this recognition that we can miss out on grace – on either extreme, through entitlement and also through self-punishment – well worth pray-cessing.

But I think another reason the case of the spilled yogurt parfait got me thinking is because it had such clear-cut answers to the questions, "What am I responsible for?" and "Where does my responsibility end?"

“You break it, you buy it” means I buy the one yogurt parfait – not the whole store, right?

“You break it, you own it” means you own the one thing you broke – you don’t own EVERYTHING that’s broken.

So to me, it would have been reasonable to pay for the parfait and – if they’d let me – it would have been reasonable to mop the floor and clean the refrigerated unit.

But I would NOT have considered it reasonable if they’d asked me to pay hundreds of dollars or to mop the entire floor and clean the entire place, and I would not have volunteered to do any of that.

And yet, in our personal relationships, don’t we often do the equivalent of buying the whole store? Of owning everything that’s broken?

Because of your especially tender conscience, it’s easy to automatically assume that when anything goes wrong, it’s *all* your fault.

Your default reaction to messes and mistakes may be self-blame, over-responsibility, self-punishment – maybe all three. That’s certainly true for me.

Partly because I’m so used to going above and beyond – you know, back to that whole idea of not being able to receive grace – but partly because it’s harder to assess what constitutes reasonable accountability or amends in our personal relationships?

The yogurt parfait had a price tag: \$7.95.

And according to Daniel, the mess I made was 2 feet by 3 feet, so 6 square feet.

Now I am grateful to have received grace instead of paying the \$7.95 and

cleaning those 6 square feet.

And also, it gives me a solid sense of assurance to know that had I needed to “take responsibility” for my mistake, that would have meant paying \$7.95 and cleaning those 6 square feet.

But I have no such sense of certainty in my relationships.

I don’t know about you, but I have had zero training in how to critically evaluate – and notice, ‘evaluate,’ the root word is ‘value’ – in how to critically evaluate the mistakes and messes I make in relationships.

And of course, I had to go look up the word ‘evaluate,’ and it means “*To estimate or set the value of something; to appraise; to assess.*”

I don’t know how to *measure* the messes and mistakes I make in relationships.

And because I don’t want to accidentally act [gasp] entitled – because, after all, that’s another word for selfish – and since I had no internal method for discerning where my responsibility begins or ends — I’ve spent my life automatically going overboard.

Regardless of whether the person impacted by my messes and mistakes expected me, or even wanted me, to engage in all that self-blame, over-responsibility, and self-punishment.

And to be clear, much of the time, they didn’t even know I was doing that because it was all happening on the inside.

Now, like I said, this story is so new, I don’t have a list of lessons I’ve learned yet! I don’t have any ‘Top 10 Tips.’

I would love to hear any insights that may have risen to the surface for you.

And I do have a few questions that I'm starting to ask, and you're welcome to borrow them.

When we make a mess or a mistake, instead of automatic self-blame, over-responsibility, and self-punishment – you know, #AllMyFault – what if we were to pray-cess one (or more) of these four questions:

1. "What PART of this mess, what PART of this mistake, is my responsibility?"
2. "What might 'You break it, you buy it' mean in this context?"
3. "What might 'You break it, you own it' look like in this relationship, in this situation, in this moment?"
4. "How can I open my heart and receive God's grace?"

[Outro music]

Well, I'm so glad you joined me for this little virtual trip to Gayle's. And hey, if you're ever in my neck of the woods, please consider this a standing invitation to meet me at Gayle's for a coffee chat! I promise I won't go anywhere near the yogurt parfait display.

I also want to invite you to another favorite hang-out, the Sensitive and Strong Community Cafe.

It's a great place to enjoy rich conversation and deep discussions with growth-minded sisters in Christ who get you because they're all HSPs, too!

One member recently shared:

I just *love* this group so much! I feel like every time I go to a Cafe Connect, my mental health improves by at least 50% 😊 I feel so 'different' and 'other' in most of my life, and I feel so 'normal' and understood in this community. ❤️

To learn more about the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe, just go to CheriGregory.com/Cafe, or click the link in the show notes.

Thank you for listening to *Grit 'n' Grace: The Podcast for Highly Sensitive Christian Women!*

I hope this episode leaves you feeling encouraged and equipped to thrive – with some new perspectives on messes, mistakes, and receiving God's grace.

Be sure to follow in your favorite podcast app and share this episode with a friend!

If you're brand new to the whole HSP concept, come take the "Am I a Highly Sensitive Person?" quiz – you'll find that link in the show notes.

And remember: God created you sensitive; in Christ, you are *always* strong.