

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #120: How to Become a Woman Who Can Be Happily Counted On

Cheri

Amy, tell me about a time that despite your best efforts you let someone down.

Amy

Oh my gosh, that's just the worst. This was years ago, and I'm sure there's a more recent one, but this was a particularly horrible one. I had just moved into my neighborhood, I was trying to make friends with my neighbors, and my next-door neighbor was so friendly and so kind, and she had put together this breakfast basically to get me together with another neighbor and that kind of thing. And it was just so amazing except that I didn't show up.

Cheri

Oh no! What happened?

Amy

I know! So I was on the sub-list for school and I got this like 6 o'clock call, you know 6 a.m. call asking me if I could sub and I was so excited that I had finally gotten the call, I was like oh sure! So I jump out of bed and I go and it's not until like 10 o'clock as I'm subbing that I remembered breakfast. But I couldn't leave! And I couldn't even text or anything. In fact, I don't know if I even texted at that point. But anyway, it was awful.

Cheri

You were just a no show.

Amy

Right. And she kind of forgave me, but anyway.

<Laughter>

Cheri

Oh gosh!

Amy

Actually, not really fully, so that was one of those times that I got punished for not showing up. How about you?

Cheri

Oh my goodness. It was so funny that you had to go far back. I went even further back because you know talking about these things in the present is still too painful. I am remembering my senior class night, okay? So '85 Is Alive. That was our class motto. We were just so excited to have survived, I guess. It will not shock you that I was part of the organization for our class night, and I had a particular part with a friend; his name is Vahe Saraffian. I had practiced, and we had practiced. I was so concerned about getting it right, that I even tipped the little cassette tape- remember cassette tapes, Amy?

Amy

Oh yeah, I shredded many a cassette tape.

Cheri

SO I had it in my dad's little, blue Honda civic right before we started, and I practiced one more time. Then I handed the tape over to the guys in the AV booth, and I forgot to rewind the tape. And so, when it came time for our little piece to start, and they pushed play on it, it was at the tail-end and I had to, like, there's this hush that falls over the crowd, and Vahe Saraffian gives me the evil eye and I have to say into the microphone, "Could you please rewind the tape?" You know, that doesn't happen instantly. It's not like with CDs where you just punch a button, and you're instantly back to the beginning. And our audience is sitting there. I don't have the gift of the gab to be funny when things are awkward. So, yeah, I can still feel the wave of horror. I had done so many things right that night, but the one little thing I had done wrong was totally public and totally awkward, so, yeah. My best efforts, and I still let someone down. I'm sorry Vahe Saraffian! I'm sorry!

Amy

Well, and what you just ended with says it all. You had done so many things right, but the one thing. Yes, I know.

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 processing what we learned from our interview with Jennifer Dukes-Lee, author of *It's All Under Control*.

Cheri

Well, I thought we should start with a success story, especially since we talk about our failures so, so much. So I want you to share a success story about learning to stop meddling, or at least learning to meddle a little less.

Amy

Yes. So mine was a mid-meddle-save. We've talked about how meddling with our adult children is just really, oh, it is so hard to stop! I mean I used to be in charge of the play dates. So I told recently on an episode of a time that I blew it with my oldest son, but recently he was sharing with us about some just hard situations with his new job, the big learning curve. And I jumped in and said, "Well, what you should do is..." and the minute I heard it come out of my mouth I said I'm so sorry I'm not gonna finish that sentence. I am sure you will know what to do. I was so proud of myself, Cheri! So it wasn't a complete success, but it was a saving myself from a wretched failure.

Cheri

Oh my gosh, but that's fabulous that you recognized it in the moment!

Amy

It was good! I thought about that whole thing where you said that we don't hear ourselves, and I think part of it was that Barry raised one of his eyebrows at me as I said it. I think that also brought it to my attention. How about you?

Cheri

I'm just so impressed. No, no, no we're going to take a moment of celebration, Amy. I guarantee no one in that room gave you the fan-fare you deserve. They just rolled their eyes at you, didn't they? No, no, no. I wish I had an air horn and confetti. A meddle-save, come on, girl, that is amazing! We need music. We need a song. We need a mid-meddle-save song. That's what we need girls. We're gonna do this thing. We're gonna come up with a mid-meddle-save song. Because only those of us who need it understand how hard it is to not meddle.

Well, my story is a little different in that it was me worrying about meddling, 'cause of course us all or nothing girls, we either jump in and do it, or we withdraw so much that we abandon. I tend to do the more abandoning thing if I'm really worried, and this has to do with our family trip to Italy earlier this year, and this was a gift from our kids to us. They planned the trip, and they paid for the trip. It was our 30th wedding anniversary gift from them. Ann-Marie was in charge of accommodations, and about a month before we were leaving, I hadn't heard anything about where we were staying. And it's her first year of grad school, and her first year of teaching, and a few other major things going on in her life. And I was like, oh, I can't say anything because that'll be meddling. But then I realized that if I don't say anything, and we get to a few days before, and there really are no accommodations then that would be a disaster. And I was like, "Which is worse, which is worse?" And I realized it's not all or nothing. Its not that I say nothing, or jump in and control, I realized that you know, I could just say something now and say, "Look, if you don't need anything or I don't want to meddle..." you know I could preface it some way. So I texted her and said, "Hey, I know you're really busy, and I'm looking

forward to the trip. Just wanted to let you know that if by any chance you'd like a little help with accommodations, I want you to know I'm available. But if you've got it all taken care of, nothing needed." Well, she texted me back immediately and said, "Mom, I have no idea where to start, and if you could even get a list going or point me in the right direction, that would be a big help." And so what ended up happening is I did the research. I came up with a list of potential good Airbnb's and then she and Jonathan went through them, and Jonathan was concerned with being close to bus stops and being close to the locations we were visiting. She was looking for an Airbnb host that spoke English. What ended happening is because I did the research, and they narrowed it down, and then we made the final choice together, it ended up being cooperation and collaboration, and each of us was using our strengths. I didn't say nothing, so I didn't abandon. I didn't wait until it was a disaster, and then throw up my hands and say, "See, I should've stepped in and done it!" I said something soon enough that we were all able to work together. And for me that was a really big victory.

Amy

That is fantastic.

Cheri

So it can happen. It can happen.

Amy

Yay. Yay.

Cheri

Cooperation. Collaboration.

Amy

We're growing. We are growing, Cheri Gregory.

Cheri

Yes. Control is not the only option in life even though it feels like it sometimes in our heads. Well, Jennifer used the term "over-helping," and I thought that was a useful term. And then she also talked about having a hard time receiving help, so to me it was like "over-helping and under-receiving." I've heard about women who over-help. I have been the woman who over-helps and I thought that was so fascinating when she pointed out that even Jesus asked for help. I hadn't really thought of it that way before.

Amy

That was amazing. That was really eye opening.

Cheri

And you've had some experience recently with somebody who needed some help.

Amy

Yes. So Barry had a foot surgery last week. And it was just one of those elective surgeries, but still, he had been in a lot of pain for a long time, and so it was just time to do it. And so I have had the pleasure of being my husband's nurse for the last week or so, and he's been a model patient. Can I just say? Except that he's had a little trouble receiving help from me. He's wanted to push through and do a lot more, and I'm like, "Just sit back and enjoy. I'm gonna be the one on the couch one day." And then I thought...mmm, I'm gonna be the one on the couch one day. And really did make me think about how will I receive when I'm the one who needs help from him, or from friends, or whoever. And I thought more than cause I might not even be able to resist the help, right? But then I started to think, how will I feel about that? And that's probably more important, because what Jennifer was talking about that I want to have more of is having peace with receiving. Whereas usually I might receive, and put a smile on my face so you think I appreciate it, but the whole time I'm really thinking I feel like such a heel and I cant... I feel so lazy! Or whatever that response is, and it's the inner angst that really detracts from the receiving itself.

Cheri

So you want to learn to receive, rather than 'ceive.

Amy

Ah, I like that. Thank you for that sticky statement.

Cheri

I learned from the best. Well, you know, while we were having the interview with Jennifer, I had this moment of conviction when she was talking about the inability to receive help, because while she was talking I was patting myself on the back, "Oh no, I've learned to receive help." In fact, I had just that very week accepted help from several women who had volunteered to help facilitate the sensitive and strong Facebook group. So we could open it up and now anybody could comment, and there's a lot of discussion going on. And so, I thought look at me, I have arrived! I accept help! But then it hit me, yeah, I accepted help, and the moment the help arrived, I started planning a whole bunch of new projects that were starting to already stress me out, and I suddenly realized that when I accept help, I then feel guilty that I've accepted help. I feel like, oh my gosh, this is proof that I am lazy. I now need to go be productive again and prove that I'm worth their help or that I don't really need it. Ah! But I realized these women really did step in so that I could have some down time, so that I could have some rest time, and I could do the things that I'd already committed to doing in other areas of my life. They did not step in to help me so I could start a whole bunch of new things that I would then need new help for. And that really hit me hard that yeah there's the accepting of help, but then what do we do in the days and weeks after we've accepted the help? Do we then start generating a whole bunch more busyness? I think I have a hard time with relief and rest. Like, I felt relieved that they had helped me, and that relief should have taken me to a place of rest to regroup and to really re-prioritize. I go from relief to panic to busyness all over again. And I've got to break that cycle, because fully receiving help means fully receiving the benefits of it. Not just paying quick lip services and then going back to the frenzy busyness all over again.

Amy

It really goes back to that root that we've talked about so many times that our productivity and our product at the end is so tied to our identity. So when our productivity is tied to our identity, we can't go through that process that you talked about with relief and rest. And so, it's a great indicator, because I think lots of us have done what you have described in different settings. So that's a red light to go, oh, my identity has gotten tied to my productivity again. I need to address that.

Cheri

You know the other thing I'm thinking listening to you is the necessity for rest isn't just for me. If I go too fast, I miss the opportunity to be grateful, to fully receive the help and then express my gratitude for it. And this is something I've been historically terrible at, because I didn't want the help. Like, okay fine, I'll begrudgingly accept it, but I'm not going to be grateful because that would imply I needed it. And what if I could go from that relief to rest to okay part of that rest is to then be grateful and express my gratitude towards those who are serving me. Ugh! That's all theory. All theory. I'm going to have to work on that. But then it does make sense, and I think I have some people I need to go say thank you to.

Alright, well, Jennifer said something that totally reminded me of your book, *Breaking Up With Perfect*. She said, "Have I accidentally made myself into a little savior for those I love?" And I know you talk about this in your book. And then the verse she really focused on was John the Baptist saying, "I am not the Christ," and then Jennifer's point was let Christ be Christ. So talk to us about this.

Amy

Yeah, when she said this, I think my sticky statement in my book is "I'm not the savior; I'm just a servant." But the time that it really hit home that God was starting to reveal this perfectionism in me that was ruining my relationships, I started realizing that this attitude of the savior attitude had seeped into my serving. And so, at the time it really hit me hard I was in India. And it was the first time that I had went to India, and so we had watched videos about the issues and the poverty and the things in India, and I had read books, you know as we do. I had researched it to death. And I thought, I got it! I know India! But when we got there, the night that we got there. It was 2 o'clock in the morning. We flew into the airport in Kolkata, and the rest of my group went through. A customs' guy decided to harass me and just really rattled me, and I was sleep deprived. I was afraid at this point. And then we walked out, and things have changed now, but at that time there were no barriers around the airport, so we walked into this sea of humanity. And people were touching me. They were all in my space trying to carry my bags, so I would tip them. There were women carrying babies on their hips begging and tapping on me and touching their mouths to say that they were hungry, and it was so terrifying, Cheri. And I'm an adventurous traveler, and so I wasn't expecting to be terrified. And we took this wild ride through the streets, 'cause all rides in a cab in Kolkata are wild. And we're going through the streets, and I'm absolutely just terrified. That's the only word I can think of, and I look up and I see this billboard that says Kolkata: City of Joy. Which is the nickname of Kolkata, and all

of a sudden, I had this flash of a realization that while I was safe in my home in America that I had really thought that my Suzy Sunshine self could fly into Kolkata, and with a smile and telling people about Jesus I could just change India, you know, 'cause I'm a glass half-full girl. But seeing that sign I was like, oh, joy here is a God-sized job. And I had come serving thinking that it was about me, and then realized, no, this is a God-sized job. And then I started looking at the way that I served in the United States. How often is it about me? One of the things that I realized when I'm serving, even at home or any place else that I can really take notice of, is that these reversals will show up in my reactions that are red lights to show that I think I'm savior instead of the servant. When things don't go my way, it gets ugly really fast. When things aren't going fast enough, you know, I'm a results, productivity girl. So if it's not happening fast enough, and I'm irritated by that, I've pretty much stepped into the savior position instead of the servant position. Or if I'm not receiving some praise or some pats on the backs or some accolades or at least acknowledgment for what I'm doing, and that irritates me, then I've gone from servant to savior again.

Cheri

Oh, those are so practical and yeah. Thank you very much for stepping on my toes. I really appreciate that.

Amy

You're welcome.

Cheri

That's so helpful.

Amy

Oh uh, weren't you the one that said this book that Jennifer wrote was just written for me?

Cheri

Maybe I said something like that. I forgot I threw you that far under the bus. Wow! Did I really do that?

<Laughter>

Amy

Well, you might've been right, but anyway. I was fascinated when Jennifer pointed out that even Jesus disappointed people.

Cheri

Oh my goodness, that was another huge aha for me. Just how naturally she said, "Oh, you will disappoint people." I'm like wait, wait, she said that like a normal sentence like there was no anxiety around it. I mean that's one of those things, and we've talked about it, that we, especially those of us who are recovering people pleasers, just the idea of disappointing anyone ever kills us. I was reading the book *The Motivation Myth*, and it gave a really good wording for

when we need to say no to people. Instead of saying I can't in terms of potentially disappointing somebody, which is something people can argue with...if I say, "Oh, I can't" in my head I imagine that they're saying, "Well, yes you could if you really wanted to" or "If you really loved me" or "If you tried hard enough." And sometimes they do, but mostly it's all in my own head. But the phrasing that the book suggested was, "I don't"

Amy

Love it.

Cheri

Like, I don't do speaking engagements on back-to-back weekends. I always take a weekend between speaking engagements. And there's something about the word I don't that's very much an identity. Like this is a chosen part of who I am. A: it's harder for other people to argue against. And if they do, then really they have a serious problem. But it just feels different saying it. I can't sounds kind of weak and wimpy, and we say that kind of thing all the time just as an excuse. It's excuse-making language. But I don't. That's much stronger and much more powerful. And so I thought, hmm, as we practice what Jennifer said, which is that we're going to disappoint people, maybe having a phrase as strong as I don't, rather than I cant, which sounds so apologetic.

Amy

That's so helpful, because I've gotten really good at saying no. I've expressed that. I am unafraid to say no, but if there's any pushback at all, I fold like a house of cards. So I need that script that I don't.

Cheri

We love a good personality quiz, and so Jennifer has these three types of control characters: the driver, the devoter, and the darling. Which one do you think I am, and which one do you think you are in all of this? I really want to get the good one.

Amy

Well, this is so funny, because, first of all, reading through this I just have to say that I just love Jennifer so much. She is hilariously funny. She takes the coolest perspective on things, so you gotta get the book and read this section. It's just fantastic. But I read it and read it and read it, and I think I have a split personality, and I think you might too. I'm gonna diagnose us with a disorder. We have a control character disorder.

Cheri

Wait! Our husbands and our kids know where to be found, right? Ok. Keep talking.

Amy

Well because, I see both driver and darling in me. But I'm not sure any of my friends would call me darling. So I'm like, mmm, maybe not darling.

Cheri

It depends on what tone of voice they use, darling.

Amy

Yeah. But I am way harder on myself than I am on everybody else. On the other hand, the driver...she said is the one that would have their basement stocked if there was an emergency, I am not that girl because I don't like the grocery store. So I couldn't decide who I was!

Cheri

Okay, what I love is that you didn't think either of us are devoters, and devoters are energized by a genuine concern and love for others. Thank you very much for telling me that's not me...yes.

Amy

Well girlfriend, I'm sorry, I'm in the same boat. I don't think either of us are going to be accused of over-nurturing.

<Laughter>

Cheri

Okay, quick, take us to scripture. We need God's word right now.

Amy

Well, so as I searched through, the one that I landed on was psalm 25:4 "Show me your ways. Lord, teach me your paths." All this comes down to controlling, manipulating, and using things, to get things to go our way. And our heart's desire needs to be to go in God's direction instead.

Cheri

Alright so what's the bad rule from these episodes?

Amy

If I'm to be counted, on which just to go back to Jennifer, she said the good thing about these women is that we're women to be counted on. And that's been big in my life, but my bad rule has been: if I'm to be counted on, I must maintain control.

Cheri

Once again, it doesn't sound like a bad rule. Oh, but you have paired it with such a powerful truth. We break the bad rule, what is the fact that we need to focus on instead?

Amy

Its powerful and painful I'm afraid, but people can count on me, as much as I count on Christ. I was thinking back to the scripture where Paul says, "Follow me as I follow Christ" and so what that means is that Paul has surrendered control to Christ, and then he's calling people to follow

him. And I think we want people to count on us, and so we can be women to be counted on truly in the best sense if we're following Christ.

Cheri

So what's the grit for you in all of this?

Amy

I have to work to overcome my need to assert my two cents. I mean I just, and this is a trust issue, is that I have to stop myself when I start to do it, which I have had some success with, but stop myself when I start to do it. And think, do I trust God to be big enough, for me, for this other person, 'cause it's really a trust issue. And how about grace for you, Cheri?

Cheri

Well, when I read that truth "People can count on me as much as I count on Christ." I cried like a baby, literally. I was like oh my word. And so for me that grace is the fact that God never gives up on me as a control freak even though I keep trying to take his job. Any other human on this earth, if I tried to take their job over and over and over, like a hostile takeover multiple times a day, I would be fired. They would not come back. And it's not even that God keeps coming back. He's always there. He's just always waiting, and he's waiting for me to remember. Oh, yeah, I'm not the Christ, and then he's thrilled that I'm willing to count on him again and hoping that I'm willing to do so a little bit longer. And so the fact that he is always here always patient, always waiting for me to count on him. That is grace.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode120.

Amy

There you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, the bible verse art, and directions about how to enter to win the giveaway of *It's All Under Control*.

Cheri

Grit-n-Grace is growing because of our amazing Growth Partners. You can learn more at www.patreon.com/gritngracegirls. We would love for you to join our team.

Amy

Make sure to join Cheri and I next week when we'll be talking to Stacey Thacker, author of *Fresh Out of Amazing*.

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 and Cheri

Break it!

Outtakes

Cheri

When Daniel said I was going to be recording up here, I'm like "Ahh ahh ahh." I started hyperventilating, because I've only ever recorded in my little office. And I'm like what is wrong with you Cheri, recording is recording, it's not that big of a deal. So.

Amy

Isn't that funny?

Cheri

Oh my routine! My routine is being messed with! Right before recording an episode about control! This is so wrong.

Amy

Hilarious. I know. Oh, gosh.

Cheri

Yeah it's hilarious, because it didn't happen to you!

Amy

Well, Barry's logging in looking at all this stuff I've never seen before on my own computer asking me all these questions. I'm like, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

Cheri

Last night, Daniel was asking me for passwords and this and that, and I'm like ... let me go find my password book. Oh, that will not be going out on the Internet waves. Don't want anybody coming in and stealing my password book. You know how disappointed they would be? You know how many passwords I have for utterly useless things?

Amy

Or accounts with no money in them.

Cheri

Exactly, exactly.