

***Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules***

**Episode #174: Becoming Grumble-Free When You Thought You Couldn't**

**Amy:** Grumble, grumble, grumble.

**Cheri:** Ok, let's do that again.

Alright, let's talk about grumbling, Amy.

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Grumble, grumble, grumble.

Well, here's my question for you – well, I'll answer it first. I'll ask and answer my own question.

**Cheri:** I love it. I'll just go hang out in the living room while you have this whole podcast episode by yourself. Text me when you're done, Amy!

**[Laughter]**

**Cheri:** I won't complain at all.

**Amy:** So I'm just gonna reveal – put it all out there today – reveal how petty and horrible I really am. But the question is, what makes you want to grumble the most? And my answer today is lack of sleep –

**[Laughter]**

– sick people who aren't me –

**[Laughter]**

– that's the horrible thing. That's all that I'm going to say about that. I'm a terrible nurse, I don't deny it. Those are the two things.

**[Laughter]**

**Cheri:** Ok first of all, I am so there with you about people – sick people who are not me. This is so completely true. Um, and the other thing that makes me grumble is people who complain in my presence.

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Wow. I can't believe we're even still friends, then.

**[Cheri laughs]**

**Cheri:** No, actually, you don't bother me. It's people I live with. I'm like – I find myself – of course especially after we talked with Tricia – I find myself literally gritting my teeth and clenching my fists when other people grumble and complain as if they think they think that their home is a safe place to let out the way they really feel. I mean, come on, what's up with that?

**Amy:** Yeah. Oh gosh, when we were talking with Tricia my main thing was “How did you get your whole family to buy into this crazy adventure?” Like, how – **how** did you do that?

**Cheri:** Did she pay them? Did she drug them?

[Laughter]

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 accusing Tricia Goyer of drugging her children –

[Cheri laughs]

– and processing what we learned from our conversation with her, the author of *A Grumble-Free Year*.

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**Cheri:** Of course, you know, obviously this is revealing so much so early in this episode because we really don't want to believe it's possible, do we. We don't want to believe it is possible without bribery or drugs that normal human beings – every-day, ordinary human beings could actually do this is just... um... if it were actually true then, we might actually have to rise to the occasion. I really don't wanna rise to the grumble-free occasion; do you?

**Amy:** Wow, that's just the truth right there. That is some real talk right there. And here's the thing that amazes me, Tricia has how many children?

**Cheri:** I think it's something like –

**Amy:** Eight?

**Cheri:** Yeah, yeah.

**Amy:** Or more?

**Cheri:** Mmhmm.

**Amy:** And there are two of us living in this house. So now I'm feeling really pathetic. But anyway...

**Cheri:** Yeah, ok, so the – part of – one of the many reasons we're feeling uncomfortable is we just don't have any excuses.

**[Cheri laughs]**

**Cheri:** Like, thank you so much, Tricia, if you can do it, anyone can do it. Why – why did we have her on? I don't remember.

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** I know! What she said was so heart-piercing. Oh my goodness. I just sat there – really, I learned so much from her.

**Cheri:** Well, and one of the things that I've been thinking about ever since, I was joking during our interview, is that my family at least – well, we'd talked about how many families do this – we fall into some kind of coded communication. Where we're not actually stating what we need, but our family of origin has some kind of special code. And I realize that at least from my family, it's very passive-aggressive. I mean, this goes back generations. We're not a family of yellors, but I come from a family of silent stewers. I don't know if you're familiar with what that's like, but evidently, I believe that silently seething is more spiritual than actually raising one's voice. And so I've been watching and listening to myself in the weeks since we talked with Tricia, and realizing, "My goodness, this is such a pattern." It's almost like a second language. We learned it so young that doing something different is almost gonna be like learning a whole new language, which is hard for brains that aren't young. Which is a nice way of saying "as old as our brains."

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Exactly. Well, your point is so well taken, because I think that we have all kinds of ways to couch grumbling. And you reminded me that I said, "If you say it in a sweet Southern voice, it's not really grumbling." This is an aside. I had to say it. For those of you that might watch Jimmy Fallon – I can't stay up that late, I just saw the clip – but he was with Lady Mary, who was a Downton Abbey character, and they did this whole British thing called, "How dare you?" And so, I think if you say it with a Southern accent or a British accent you can really say anything and

get by with it, and people don't realize until about an hour later that you were actually grumbling and complaining.

**[Cheri laughs]**

**Amy:** Anyway, total random aside.

**Cheri:** I love that.

**Amy:** But also the other couching thing – I had a relative – I'll keep it very general – she is no longer living – but – she was the master of the critical question.

**Cheri:** Mmmmmm.

**Amy:** So it was grumbling and complaining and critiquing in particular, but it's, "Oh, are you going to do it like that?"

**Cheri:** Arrrrrrrrgh!

**Amy:** But also said in a very sweet voice, so as a child I didn't even realize she was doing it until I grew up, and I stayed with her for two weeks. And, at one point, about pulled every hair out of my head. Yeah. So, I mean, we do couch it. And like you said, we get so good at it, we don't even think it's sinful.

**Cheri:** Mmm. Mmm. Oh, you had to use the sin word!

**Amy:** Mmm. Mmm.

**Cheri:** So, the first step in all of this appears to be – as with so many of the other topics we talk about – really pray-cessing and, inviting the Holy Spirit’s conviction for just awareness of what we’re doing. And especially these things that have been so habitual, to recognize that just because it’s the way we’ve always done it doesn’t mean it’s the way we need to keep on doing it.

Now, I loved it when Tricia said something about – she said, “I wasn’t angry, or at least I didn’t think I was.” And I thought, “Oh, well that’s funny!” Because when you see Tricia’s picture, she not only has this adorable smile but she has dimples like you wouldn’t believe. I mean, she looks like the happiest person. And so I was just struck like, “Anger? Tricia Goyer, anger?” And I also didn’t really connect anger with grumbling. So what do you think about this whole anger component?

**Amy:** Well, I don’t even like the word anger. I really prefer like frustration or like resentment. I mean I really think we should take the edge off the word anger.

**Cheri:** Oh, ok. So let’s banish the word “anger” from Grit’n’Grace. Listeners, from here on out, Amy has declared “anger” is no longer a word on Grit’n’Grace.

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Which is so reflective of the way I operate, right? Because I don’t deal well with negative emotions. So, even when I read “anger” in the notes I was like, “Well, I don’t think I’m so angry! I think it’s more like ‘frustrated’ or ‘resentful.’” And then I thought, “Wow, there you go again.” Trying to take the edge off of what is actually sin in some cases. I really do think, when I started reflecting on that, that grumbling is the passive-aggressive form of anger. And whenever I started trying to think of specific examples, I thought – most of the time my anger comes from, “This isn’t fair.” And then I grumble. And so, I wanted to give just a minor example in the grand scheme of things, but it is one that has made me frustrated and resentful. I was the laundress in our house, and before callers call in or listeners call in and say I should have had my children

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doing laundry, they did, but not all the time. So a lot of times I was doing the laundry and they were mowing the lawn. And no – what is it about guys? That they don't know to turn their socks right side out?

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Right? And I would fume, sticking my hands –

**Cheri:** Ewww!

**Amy:** – into these stinky socks. And turning them right side out, yes! Teenage boys' socks!

**Cheri:** I have the heebie jeebies!

**Amy:** To put them in the laundry so they could be laundered the correct way. So, you know, there was a lot of grumbling, and I'm sure passive-aggressive remarks made to the guys in my house about the state of their socks when they put them in the laundry basket. And finally, you know what I realized?

You don't have to turn socks right side out to wash them.

**[Cheri laughs]**

**Amy:** Hello!

[Laughter]

**Cheri:** I love it. Blinding flash of insight.

[Amy laughs]

**Amy:** So, it was the simplest thing, though. You know, Tricia – we’re gonna talk about it too – talks about ways to resolve it, but sometimes it’s just – hello! If you’re resentful of the work, don’t do the work. So I stopped turning the socks right side out while they were dirty, and I washed them inside out, and I folded them inside out. And eventually those boys had to turn them right side out themselves.

**Cheri:** Yes they did! Hey, you know, with your strategy they were right side out half the time! Because if they put them on wrong side, and then stripped them off, they turned right side! So hey, it actually worked! At least better than resentment and frus–, you know, you’re reminding me, the first emotion I remember Annemarie naming, she was just a little toddler, and she had one of these popping things that kids push, and they go poppity-poppity,-poppity-poppity-pop, and she got it stuck. She thought it could go through a certain like, beside a certain chair or sofa in the house, and it got stuck. And she kept trying to force it through and she finally went “I FUSS-TATED RIGHT NOW!” We have laughed about that ever since, but I remember just being so in awe that she could identify it with such precision, even at such a young age. Well, and you know, here’s the thing about anger – and we’re gonna keep these thing’s intentions. Sometimes our response to our anger is sin, but at its root, anger signals an unmet need.

**Amy:** Mmmmmm.

**Cheri:** And so what you finally figured out was this unmet need probably wasn’t, actually that big of a deal. And so, you did figure a way to solve it for yourself. It was actually something you didn’t actually need other people to meet for you. But sometimes it signals a truly valid and vital need that we do need to be able to communicate about. And Tricia gave us some really, really good advice on that. So, I loved her example – we – you know – you asked how we’re supposed to voice our needs without being selfish or sounding like we’re complaining, and I

loved her example of that. How they got into the habit of staying up with the teenagers – and I remember that while she was talking I was thinking, “Ok, how are they gonna do this? How is she – is she gonna say, ‘You’re keeping me up too late!’” or, “I love you guys, but...” And she just said, “I need more sleep.” And I was like –

**Amy:** Crazy.

**Cheri:** – astonished by how simple that was. And, also, that that conversation happened – it didn’t happen at 11:57 one night when she was so tired that she might say something that she regretted, they had that conversation during a normal time of day when it wasn’t in the middle of that situation. So, I was thinking about ways I’ve done this wrong and ways I’ve done this better. And one of the ways I definitely did it wrong was, back in last December and even January of this year, when Rafiki was so sick. When he was first diagnosed with diabetes, and I was sometimes doing glucose testing up to ten times a day, ‘cause I was running curves trying to figure out insulin and all that kind of stuff. And I was expecting my family members to notice and know how much time and energy I was putting into him. How much sleep I was losing over it, and I was expecting them to, then, in their own minds, put two and two together and realize, “Well, if mom is doing all this, there’s a lot of things she can’t do...” And I needed them to take over other chores that they were used to me doing. And, I really kind came to the conclusion that nobody else in this family cared whether he lived or died.

**Amy:** Mmm.

**Cheri:** And that was not true. What was true is that they didn’t know what to do because I was distraught and tired all the time and so they just kind of gave me space, because I wasn’t communicating clearly. So, a couple things I feel like I’m doing better with now in being more clear – Jonathon tends to be in the house when their nighttime feeding needs to happen. Because we’re still on a feeding schedule which keeps Rafiki in remission. And so, I feel like I’ve gotten much better at just directly saying to him every single day, “Is tonight a night that you can feed the cats?” And he’ll say yes. And so, rather than hinting or hoping or dancing around it, just being clear. And then something I just started doing with Annemarie, because she is – she has this Enneagram 8 personality. She’s an activist. And I’ve not really recognized that – I mean, I’ve recognized that she has a big personality, but I’ve never recognized that it’s that passion for justice that motivates her –

**Amy:** Mmm.

**Cheri:** – and so she came home from a job interview last week, and she – it was a fabulous interview, and she got a job offer, and she went on a rant about how awful it is that wages are so low, that nobody can live on that kind of wage, and capitalism this, and student loans that, and no future and the other thing, and I – I was so confused! And the Enneagram 2 in me wanted to figure out how to make this all better, and I started feeling like, “Well, maybe she’s not being grateful for what she’s been offered...” and you know, because that’s the way I was taught, look for the bright side, look for the silver lining, and she’s talking about how the women that interviewed her were so capable and how unfair it was that they weren’t earning as much as they ought to have, and I finally realized, “Oh, she’s on a protest. She has seen injustice, and she is protesting. It’s not about me! She’s not mad at me! There’s nothing in the house – you know, I’m not like unsafe because she’s in the process of expressing anger.” You and I both, anger is not our favorite thing, you know, we’re like, “How do I make it go away? How do I extinguish the flames of anger here?”

**[Amy laughs]**

**Cheri:** And so, what I’ve started in my own head – and sometimes I’ll say it out loud, but mostly in my own head – is asking, “What are you protesting right now?” And when I can think that, or when I can ask her that, instead of, “Why are you angry? Why aren’t you grateful? You should – you know, be happy – Well, didn’t you say that the interview went well? Why are you so upset?” But, “What are you protesting right now?” Really seems to get to the heart of the matter and allows me to listen and understand and hear what’s really going on inside.

**Amy:** Hmmm. That is so insightful. And I have a family member to use that with too! So thank you for that. Instant application!

Well, I’ve started thinking about vacations, ‘cause I just got back from one, and vacations are wonderful, but sometimes vacations are hard. And, you know, it’s funny because, you know, from knowing you I have discovered that I am borderline HSP. So, I have a few HSP tendencies, and I’m an ambivert. So, I am an extrovert until I’m not. And then, I just need some time by myself. Well, on vacation, it’s almost impossible to get time by yourself. And, there’s so much going on that it does start to set off my HSP tendencies as well.

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An example of doing it wrong was even this last week – I was at the end, I needed time by myself, and I went and I got in this space by myself, but Barry kind of followed me to that space. Which, God bless him, why does he love me? I don't know, because I can be so awful. And I just snapped his head off. But all I needed to say is, "Hey babe, I love you, but I need some time by myself."

**Cheri:** Mmmhmm.

**Amy:** And he would have been fine with that! So anyway, it was – Tricia's example was so helpful in helping me to think, "How can I do that better next time? And not snap my poor husband's head off for wanting to spend time with me? That's crazy." Yeah.

**Cheri:** Well, it all comes back to being aware of what you actually need with enough lead time to communicate that to others, because that's what it sounds like was missing, is – by the time you realized what you needed, you didn't have any margin left to communicate, so.

**Amy:** That's really true. That's a good point that I was really at my end.

**Cheri:** You were done. The switch had flipped.

Well, the other thing I loved that Tricia talked about was focusing on gratitude and being – she gave some really great specific examples of expressing that appreciation very verbally to other people. And what it reminded me of – well, first of all, I started thinking and listening to myself throughout the weeks and I'm like, "I just don't do this." This is something I need to be much more conscious of.

But it reminded me, a few years ago, a friend and I were gonna do this big challenge. We were gonna write 1,001 thank-you notes in a year. Like, on average, something like – you know, when you break it down, it's only like three a day. I mean, how hard could it be to write three thank-you notes in a day? And I abandoned that project immediately after buying a stack of thank-you notes – like, I still have them, I never used a one of them – and she either abandoned the project like two weeks in or two days in, I can't remember. So, I just know that – and maybe

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some of our listeners will like this – it is so easy to have good intentions for this, but actually executing it is where it makes a difference. And that’s – that’s where the rubber meets the road.

**Amy:** Absolutely. Well, I got to thinking about how Barry’s love language – so a lot of this application today is marriage, obviously – but Barry’s love language is Words of Affirmation, but the interesting thing is when I reflected how over the years I really have tried to pay attention to that and pay attention to what he’s doing and tell him thank you, and how proud I am of him, of the amazing way he does his job, and just to notice and really say things out loud. It does a couple things. It builds my husband up, and you know, we want to do that; but the other thing it does is it helps me to refocus.

And when I refocus in gratitude for what he is doing, it makes the little things that he doesn’t do – like turning socks right side out – it makes them, you know, it puts them in perspective! Because if I can flip that thought process of, “Ugh, he never turns his socks right side out!” to, “I’m happy to do this for him, because he mows the lawn every week and I’m thankful not to.” You know? I mean, it really does change the way we think, and then that changes our actions.

**Cheri:** Absolutely.

One of the other things that Tricia talked about that I just thought was so important. She used the example of her grandmother, of how hard-wired praise is in her, even though her memory is not doing well. It is still something she’s done so much that it’s now become a permanent part of her, even when things are hard.

**Amy:** And I was amazed by that story. ‘Cause I just, well, I guess I’m human and that praise is not my natural default, really. Grumbling and complaining is my natural default, and I really have been trying to work on this by reshaping my thought patterns. But first, you have to recognize it and stop them.

And Tricia kind of made that point too, that it got – it kind of got to a breaking point of all the grumbling in her family, and I think I had gotten to a breaking point of just negative thought patterns and grumbling and complaining, and some of what I realized – because of some things Barry said – is that I don’t always say them out loud, but having them going through my head all the time is just as destructive and negative, and so, I have been trying to sass my inner critic. Because my inner critic, she critiques me pretty harshly, in fact, mostly harshly; but she

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critiques other people, too. And I have been trying to get sassy with her. So when I realized that the inner critic is going, going, going, that I stop that, and I start to try to replace some of those thoughts.

So just – the example is, I was supposed to have lunch with a friend, and she didn't show up. And I was like – so you know my first thought pattern was the default to the negative, "Wow, she must not really care about me. I can't believe she forgot." Blah, blah, blah, you know, it was the negative, and I thought, "Wait, stop. The truth is she does care about me. She's very punctual and also organized. Maybe something happened to her. I need to pray for her, because she's not here so there's a reason for it." And I started praying for her. The reason? Was actually that I had written the wrong day on the calendar.

**[Laughter]**

**Cheri:** Oops!

**Amy:** Imagine if I had written the wrong day on the calendar but spent like five hours thinking how my friend didn't care about me! How awful, right? So I am trying to change those thought patterns. And it's funny, because I'm – when one of my kids was young, we were going to a therapist. And she used the term "awfulizing." Well, I have started realizing that I do a lot of "awfulizing," and I think "awfulizing" leads to grumbling and complaining. So we can either praise, or we can awfulize. And it's a choice.

**Cheri:** So, so good.

Alright, well. What I wanna do – at least for myself, and you have to come along because you're my partner in crime –

**[Amy laughs]**

**Cheri:** – is I wanna challenge us and our listeners to a grumble-free holiday season. And I know that sounds like a pipe dream, or the impossible goal, but hey, even if we have less grumbling, even if it's not completely grumble-free. It's still worth it. But I wanted to break it down into perfectionists and people-pleasers, because I think there are slightly different challenges here. So why do you think a perfectionist might benefit from doing this? What might they gain from choosing a grumble-free approach to the holidays?

**Amy:** Well, just for flipping that switch from “awfulizing” to “praise” is a huge one because I think perfectionists “awfulize” because we see the imperfections in every little thing. And so, we tend to focus on those imperfections.

Why do you think a people-pleaser should choose a grumble-free holiday season?

**Cheri:** You know, I think for a people-pleaser, it'll come down to really having to learn to ask for what they want and need rather than expecting everybody else to mind-read or for them to do the dance. I think for people-pleasers doing the dance of trying to make everybody happy without knowing what they really – and so, not only ask for what they need but ask others for what they actually want and need. I think it'll curate the amount that they actually need to do. Because otherwise, they're trying to be all things to all people, and we don't do that anymore 'cause we've learned to exhale. So there.

**[Laughter]**

**Amy:** Exactly. Exactly.

Well, Tricia gave us a great scripture to really focus on – Philippians 2:14-15: “Do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.”

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That verse is so amazing. That last part to me is amazing, 'cause you know what? A grumble-free person really does shine. I mean, don't they? Even in our culture today or maybe especially in our culture today?

**Cheri:** Yeah.

So, what's the bad rule that we're breaking in these couple of episodes?

**[Amy laughs]**

**Amy:** I think it's the one I've really embraced for a long time, "Well, grumbling's not so bad!" That's actually a bad rule. Because Tricia – I put a quote for the fact to focus. She said, "Grumbling matters to God."

**Cheri:** Yeah, she did.

**Amy:** And that's tough, man, but I think it's part of allowing the Holy Spirit to shine His spotlight on us, to say, when that scripture, Philippians 2, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing." It's a Commandment, right there in Scripture. It matters to God.

So what's the "grit," Cheri?

**Cheri:** Well, it takes me "grit" to watch my mouth – and, like you said, those thoughts that are going on in my head, because it is just so much easier and so much more natural to let them both run wild. To just let it, let it go. So it's gonna take "grit" for me to hit the pause button and to be intentional.

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What's the "grace" piece for you?

**Amy:** Well, I really think that it is that key that Tricia gave us, which is gratitude, so we're grateful to God for grace, and when we're grateful to God for grace, it quenches the anger we feel towards other people, and then we extend that same grace that we've been given to others.

**Cheri:** We hope you've enjoyed Episode 174 of Grit'n'Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

**Amy:** Make sure to hop on over to the website, [gritngracegirls.com/episode174](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode174). There you'll find our transcript, this week's Digging Deeper devotional, and links to Tricia's book and other great resources.

**Cheri:** We'll be continuing the conversation over in our Facebook group this week. If you're not yet a member, just search Facebook for Grit'n'Grace girls and you'll find us.

**Amy:** Next week, I'll be interviewing Denise J. Hughes and Cheri Gregory, authors of *Sensitive & Strong*, a guide for highly-sensitive persons and those who love them.

**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**

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**Cheri:** And then for a people-pleaser, what do you think the benefits would be for somebody who leans more into people-pleasing?

**Amy:**

[Stunned silence]

I don't know. I should have asked – let me ask you. Why do you think people –

[Amy laughs]

**Cheri:** Start over and ask me.

**Amy:** Why do you think that a people-pleaser should choose a grumble-free holiday season?