

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode 46: Healthy, Happy Friendships: Creating Connections and a Girlfriend Network

Cheri

Okay, so tell me why you took that personality test this week.

Amy:

Well, I bought StrengthFinders for all of my family members. And Barry and I had spent a whole Saturday morning, with cups of coffee, discussing StrengthsFinder. So I'm just in personality profile mode.

Cheri:

I love it!

Amy:

And I had such a good time taking it ... except, golly Cheri, I just have such angst over my personality profiles!

Cheri:

Why's that?

Amy:

They peg me completely, and I kinda don't like that. And also, some of my strengths, I kinda feel like I'm always defined as bossy. I don't wanna be that person!

Cheri:

Well, you put me in a bind 'cause you emailed me and you asked me to guess your personality.

Amy:

I know!

Cheri:

And so I guessed the safe guess!

Amy:

You guessed the nice girl one. I wasn't that girl! You knew that!

Cheri:

You have the same personality as my daughter. And growing up, she was always like, "It sounds so mean! It sounds so mean! I don't want to be this one!"

Amy:

Yeah — just to clarify, I'm Choleric, which sounds like a disease that is waterborn...!

Cheri:

Or the other term is Driver ... or Leader ...

But here's the thing: When you emailed back and said that you feel like over the last few years God has kind of tempered it ... I got to thinking ... 10 years ago, do you think we would have been friends?

Amy:

I have thought about that before. Because we're both strong personalities, and we're both kinda bossy!

Cheri:

Well, this is Cheri Gregory ...

Amy:

And I'm Amy Carroll

Cheri:

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

Amy:

Today, we're processing our conversation with Mary Snyder and exploring why having a friend network is such a powerful thing.

Cheri:

Lets talk about Mary!

Amy:

How much fun is she?

Cheri:

Not only is she way too much fun, but I got to spend four days with her a couple weeks ago and she's just as much fun in real life as she was in the interview. I think we're all going to be like lining up to be her BFF.

Amy:

I thought the same thing though! SO many of the women we've interviewed, we've talked about how we want to be friends with them now, but Mary is the fun friend that you want on your street or your cul-de-sac to, you know, bring the life to the party, for sure.

Cheri:

Oh she absolutely is. In fact, if there's anybody I've seen who actually gives Kathi Lipp a run for her money in terms of the fun factor ... those 2 in the same room is actually a scary prospect. That's an awful lot of fun and charisma in the same place.

Amy:

Well let's start...since we're talking about the fun part of friendship...with her suggestion to take road trips together. Mary, if you're listening, you're invited to go on any road trip that we plan. I think everybody would agree. So have you taken a road trip with a friend and how did that go?

Cheri:

My best friend from high school, we used to plan little day trips or weekend trips. We've never done anything long. But for one of her birthdays I planned a getaway at a bed and breakfast. We found a little town and we went book store browsing and ate at coffee shops and stuff. And I realized we did kind of do those kind of things when I was young and didn't have kids and didn't have a husband. As I got older I lost the intentionality and I lost even the "Let's have fun together as friends." I don't know what kicked in. I think what kicked in was "oh we have kids the same age. Lets do a play date. Lets work together for the good of our kids. Lets do PTA bake sale together" and *friendship* and *work* became synonymous rather than *friendship* and *fun*. How 'bout you?

Amy:

Seasons of life are a real thing. And even now that I'm an empty nester if I leave for long periods of time it means that I'm leaving Barry at home alone. So I mean you have to navigate all of that, but yes. This last year my bestie Holly went with me when I went to suffer for Jesus in Lake Tahoe

Cheri:

That's right.

Amy:

And did a speaking event there. And so we stayed...

Cheri:

Let's just point out that you were in California and (a) you didn't tell me AND (b) you didn't invite me. And (c) you didn't come see me but I'm not bitter because I'm such a forgiving friend.

Okay so you were saying...because this isn't all about me...

Amy:

Terrible! It is terrible. And it was after I made this big plan that I thought, "wait a minute. Cheri...Lake Tahoe is in California..."

Cheri:

Cheri might hear about this. I'm gonna be in big trouble.

Amy:

Okay here's the sad part: it's not so much of a *friend* problem as it's a *geographical* problem. I'm like, "oh yeah. I'm close to Cheri when I'm there" Anyway, I'm so sorry! We got...

Cheri:

I'm just playing the guilt card the way a good friend would ... back to the story you were telling.

Amy:

We planned to have three extra days after the speaking event. So she came and was my assistant which was awesome during the speaking event. And then we had three days together and can I just say that my favorite memory...yes riding the tramp up to the top of the mountain to look down on the lake, all of that was awesome. But my favorite memory is we were walking back to the car and I got to laughing so hard that I had to stop and cross my legs because I am a woman of a certain age and I did sort of need to go potty. I was not sure if I was going to make it because I was laughing so hard.

People might notice—our listeners—that I love to laugh. And so its just moments like those on a trip that you can't...or some kind of extended time together that's difficult to have that without some extended time and being intentional.

Cheri:

That's true. I'm thinking of all the "remember when" moments in my friendships and they almost always were a part of an extended block of time together. Not that they can't happen over coffee, but they're more likely to be when you've let your guard down when you've spent a certain amount of time together...the inside jokes are starting to develop and ...

Amy:

Yeah. It takes time. I was thinking what does it take for good relationships to develop? The number one thing it takes is time. And you think back to our college days when we sat in our dorm rooms for hours ta time talking to each other or across the dark room after the lights have been turned out with your roommate in the dorm room...that's when those deep friendships develop. But it's hard to find that kind of time as an adult. So that's part of it: the time. But the vulnerable sharing in that time and for me of course, a big dose of laughter is a must with my friends, you know? It's a bonding thing.

Cheri:

One of the things that we talked to Mary about was her intentionality of making the time happen and causing the proximity and being the one to go first and to invite other people. So do you find that you do a lot of the initiating with your friendships? Do you find yourself responding, do you find it balancing? What's happening in YOUR life these days?

Amy:

That's a good question. I think that has changed for me over time. I almost always used to be the initiator.

But I have started realizing that I had developed a lot of one-sided friendships. And I think it was in my worst days of perfectionism that I was the least wise about my friendships.

I DOVE into whatever was right in front of me, whoever. I just kind of floated into friendships and then I worked so hard to make it work and try to prove myself. And probably not surprisingly those are the ones that did not last. So one of the things I try to ask myself about questions now, this is my big question: *Is this person as invested as I am?* And if they are then that's great, we're gonna be friends and if not, I've learned to

feel that's okay too. But I am not going to continuously to invest in a friendship that the other person is not investing as well. So I know that was kind of a long answer to a short question...

Cheri:

No that's great I was gonna say "Would you repeat that what you said about perfection?" .. I'm gonna try to do it from memory: it was in your worst days of perfectionism you were the least wise about your friendships. Is that how you said it?

Amy:

Absolutely.

Cheri:

Wow. That is...that's profound. What if God points to somebody and says I want you to help them, I want you to take care of them. Is that someone who you would still ask your question about whether this is a good person to invest in or is that a different scenario completely?

Amy:

I think that's a different scenario. So I have decided that there's a difference. Well maybe I should parse it into three pieces instead of two.

There's being friendly, which I can do with everyone because I'm called to. That's part of our kindness we talked about. Part of really loving people is I can be friendly but that's different than being friends.

And that's different than a call to ministry in someone's life. Now sometimes those calls to ministry where you are giving a lot to someone for a long period of time, that turns into a friendship. But if it never becomes reciprocal? I've had to realize that's not a friendship.

And I've mistaken...I've mixed up the three. So there's three types of people that I interact with: those that I'm friendly with, those that I'm friends with, and those that I'm doing ministry to or for.

Sometimes they overlap, sometimes they intermingle, but I've learned to not mistake one for the other.

Cheri:

Just because somebody's being friendly, doesn't mean they're my new best friend. And just because somebody's ministering to me, doesn't mean we're suddenly bonded and have become BFFs over night.

And so I think for women this can be a little dicey, especially if we're in a season of neediness ... and just recognizing ... one of the things I took away from Mary is the idea that there is different she called it the girlfriend network! The idea that there are different, small portions of our lives that we share with different women.

And she said that there's the women she goes and has Mexican food with, and there's the women she dishes about her nails with. I wish I'd realized that much much younger. I think I would have spread my neediness and just the different parts of who I am over more people rather than looking for that ONE friend. That's way too much of a burden for whomever it was that I picked to be my friend for life. And it definitely wasn't healthy for me. And so this idea to be able to say, you know, we have this kind of friendship where we talk about books or we talk about our kids. That works for me a lot better.

Amy:

Absolutely. I loved that. When she said it, I recognized I am probably in one of the happiest friendship phases of my life right now. And it's because I have a friendship network. I wouldn't have expressed it that way, I hadn't really recognized it, but when she said that I had that flash of insight of "oh! This is why this time of life: I'm using my time intentionally rather than floating in and trying to prove myself" and like you said I'm not choosing one person to try to meet all my needs. And it's just working so much better! Mary is a genius!

Cheri:

Well it sounds so freeing! How could we put this into an action step, which I'm terrible at but I give it my best shot. What might that look like?

And thinking back to some of our other conversations in the past about how as people pleasers and perfectionists we can sometimes lead with too much vulnerability that's designed to get the other person to bond to us quickly. And so for me what its saying is that I need to do a better job at something I'm not really that good at, and that is just casual chit chat. Sometimes talking about the weather isn't a bad way to start, or talking about the event we're at. Just that surface conversation might keep me from over-committing too early to something or coming across as overly needy or overly desperate.

Mary was talking about kind of testing the waters and seeing what kind of friendships might actually be, and seeing if the values match to see if it has some longevity to it.

Not in a way of being dishonest or coy or putting walls up. But just to say you know good friendships take some time to develop so it's okay to take a little bit of time to get started rather than diving in so deep so fast, which is what at least this recovering perfectionist used to do. So I don't know. Does that match your experience at all?

Amy:

Oh absolutely. I love what you just said and I think not only is it okay, but its actually wise. Because... I ran across a scripture, I was doing some studying of scripture on friendship. Proverbs 12:26a the first part says, "the righteous choose their friends carefully." What a concept! And you know carefully is *intentionally*, its *wisely*. To me, what you said about chitchat, not only are we keeping things light and going deeper gradually but *listening* a lot. One of the things...

Cheri:

Wait what did you say? I wasn't paying attention.

Amy:

I know...

Yes listening is so hard for the girl who just wants to talk.

Cheri:

I was too busy thinking about what I wanted to say next!

Amy:

But really *listening* and *paying attention to red flags*.

One of the things that I have made the mistake of time and time again—I think I've shared this — my fleshly part loves to hear some gossip. Now I don't tend to pass on gossip, which makes me look good you know. But man do I love to hear it.

Lady Aster who was an American woman and one of the first women members of the British parliament, she used to say, "if you don't have anything nice to say, come sit by me."

And I actually have laughed about that because I've been like oh yeah I was lady aster. But what I realized is that the person who will say negative things about other people to

me, also says negative things about *me* to other people. So I pay really close attention to that now. How does this person talk about her current friends? Because that's how she's going to talk about me in the future!

Cheri:

You know I have one friend and I noticed within the first few months of spending time with her .. and we happened to take a few day road trips together. She's the person I call whenever Kathi Lipp is speaking in a 2 hour radius. And I discovered early on that (a) she will not say anything negative about anyone ever and (b) she will not respond whenever I say something negative. It just flat lines. It probably only took me two drives to realize, this is A. Thing. She doesn't say "Cheri stop it." She just won't respond.

It's awfully hard to keep going when there's no response. When nobody giggles when you've said something about somebody. she just doesn't say something. The conversation dies an almost embarrassing death of silence. And she's a good person to be with because I know... she won't even talk about it; she just smiles. She just smiles because yes as a matter of fact it is a thing. Now that I think about it I need to hang out with her more often.

Amy:

Wow, I was thinking what a great friend! And what ... you trust her!

Cheri:

Oh absolutely.

Amy:

Because there's a deep trust that develops with a person like that. Oh I want to be that Amy.

Cheri:

So the grit aspect is that all friendships do take risk. We can extend ourselves to people who are gonna say no and not be a good match and they aren't actually rejecting us- they're saying no to that one invitation. But I've allowed that to cause me — that fear of rejection —to sit back and do the "Fine. Its easier not to have friends than to extend myself." And what I'm finding now is that's not necessarily true. It's when I put too much weight on an invitation like "Would you like to go out to coffee?" When it used to be "And by the way, my entire future is resting on the line. A yes means you're owning me completely. And no means you're rejecting me completely."

Its just coffee really. Its just coffee and a conversation. And to realize the more we do it- the more we extend ourselves, some people are going to say *no*, some people are going to say *yes*, and one coffee may be all we have with some people. And that's okay too.

It doesn't have to mean anything. When I go into what things mean, I'm generally mean and I'm mean about me. So...

Amy:

I love that. Yes. And the realization that we're not gonna connect with everyone at the same level, you know? Again, we can be friendly without that next step of being friends because we just may not connect.

Cheri:

What was the grace that you see in our conversation with Mary?

Amy:

I really loved her point and her advice to choose the woman that's in front of us instead of trying to continually seek out the "perfect" friend. And that might sound like the opposite of choosing your friends carefully but I don't really think it is. Her advice was that person doesn't have to be just like you to be your friend. There's a lot of grace in that. And I think there's a lot to be gained from having friends who are not like us.

Cheri:

Absolutely. And then you came up with a great bad rule that once again pokes me in my soft spot, but ... what was the bad rule that you came up with for these episodes?

Amy:

"I need to find a bestie who meets all my needs."

Cheri:

You know when you say it that way I recognize it for what it is, which is a really *bad* rule.

Amy:

It is.

Cheri:

Okay so what's the truth? What's the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy:

Well this is directly from Mary, so good: "Choosing a friend network carefully makes for healthy, happy friendships."

Cheri:

And I'll just end by saying I'm really glad we're friends.

If we'd met 10 years ago, I don't think we would have been friends. I would have been too intimidated by you. And so I would have tried to impress you ...

And then I got all teary-eyed thinking *We would have missed out on being friends. How sad is that!*

Amy:

I'm so glad we met at the right time, then.

Cheri:

I am too! I am too!

Amy:

I treasure you. Yes.

Cheri:

Well, visa versa.

<music>

Cheri:

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode46

Amy:

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

Cheri:

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #46 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

Amy:

Join us next week, when we'll be talking with Denise Hughes, author of the Word Writers inductive Bible study series.

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!

Cheri:

And ... and here's the worst part: what if I'd met you and ... not liked you? Ewww! I can't even imagine that ... no, I can't!

You are like one of the friendliest, one of the sweetest people I know. And sometimes when you tell me some of these stories — like Action Amy and truth-telling — *I'm like, Really? Is she sure about that?*

Amy:

When people describe me as sweet it really does crack me up, because my husband would never describe me that way!

He says I'm kind ... he says I'm one of the kindest people he knows, which is a huge compliment. But sweet?

My mother, when Barry came to my parents to ask if he could marry me, my mother just stared him down. She goes, "You know you're getting a tiger by the tail, right?" That was her answer!