

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST Episode #273

“Debunking the ‘Too Emotional’ Myth”

Convo with Cheri & Amy

Cheri Gregory

Hey friend, it's Cheri Gregory.

And you're listening to Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST that equips you to love who you're NOT, love who you ARE, and live your ONE Life Well.

You know, just a few weeks ago, as I was *finally* dusting off these audio files which had been sitting on my hard drive for many many months, I thought back years — all the way back to when we started Grit 'n' Grace, I told Amy that my goal was 50 listeners.

And so as I was preparing to revive Grit 'n' Grace after our more than 2-year hiatus, I told God that after our more than 2 year hiatus, I would be SO thrilled to still have 50 listeners.

Well.

As it turns out, we have the best listeners EVER! And we have more than 50. So I want to say thank you for still being here! For still listening! Oh my word, we have been blown away by the emails and comments you've sent us!

So. Today's episode is a Convo — it's Amy and me, LIVE processing our interview with Michele Cushatt.

(Quick parenthetical, here: if you haven't heard both parts yet, can I encourage you to hit pause, listen to Episode 271 and 272, and then come back.)

And do keep in mind that this Convo was recorded at the end of July 2023.

Okay, without further ado ...

Cheri Gregory

So we are doing this all in one day, which is not something we really ever did in the past. But it's kind of exciting.

So for our listeners, I'll just go ahead and tell you that we just experienced both parts – Part 1 and Part 2 of the interview with Michele – because we did it all at once — and then we took a little break and we're coming back. We have not spent a week or two or a month reflecting on this. We are giving you responses kind of on the fly here.

And so – as I so love to do – I'm going to throw Amy straight under the bus.

(Cheri laughs)

Amy Carroll

I feel like I'm wrung out like sponge today. Here we go!

Cheri Gregory

(Laughs) No, I will be very gentle –

Amy Carroll

In a good way!

Cheri Gregory

– I would love to hear from you. What is something that really was significant for you from what Michele shared with us?

Amy Carroll

Well, okay, so you told our listeners, our friends, that we were just coming out of the interview with Michele.

But earlier this morning, we did the first episode of the season, too. And so today is a Grit'n'Grace recording marathon, which – I can't think of anything better than that.

But in that first episode, even now I'm like "Whew, that was a little, maybe more real and raw than people want to hear!" But I was pretty real that things are kind of in a tough spot right now. I have had some lower lows than I've had in decades maybe.

So anyway, *all* of what Michele had to say was just straight to me, I felt. And I hope other people felt the exact same way. But the thing that just ministered to me the most was this picture – and we could see her hands as she held them out – that we hold our current reality in one hand — and that is lament, and that is telling the truth about how difficult things can be, and maybe **are** in our reality. While in the other hand, that we hold the future promise.

And then she recited all those beautiful spiritual promises that God gives us, that He will never leave us or forsake us, that we are not orphans, that we are His friends, you know, I think about John 17 that I've just come back to over and over again, that we are loved by God and Jesus, the Holy Spirit, as much as God loves Jesus.

That truth is – it's just incomprehensible. And yet, that's one of those truths that is held in my hand.

It's not only a future promise, but it's a present promise. It is in my present along with the lament in the other hand. So I just had that thought you know, my verbal processing, is yes, they are future promises, but they are true in our present as well as the lament.

And you've talked about this so much here, Cheri, that it doesn't have to be either/or, it's not either lament *or* promises; it's lament **and** promises.

So I just needed to hear the promises, because it is easy to get kind of bogged down in the laments. The laments are important; but without the promises, there's despair, as Michele said.

Cheri Gregory

One of the things she said was "Until we can tell the truth about our pain, we can't embrace the truth about our rescue."

And I thought that was another beautiful juxtaposition.

The number of women I have worked with through the years – and I'm sure you've encountered the same as a speaker and as a coach as well – who are afraid to even start opening up ... they don't want to open Pandora's box ... they don't want to start grieving, because what I hear is, "I'm afraid if I start, I will never stop."

They're afraid if they start crying, they will never stop crying. If they start grieving, they will never stop grieving.

And I think in many cases, we have one person in our life that we're afraid of becoming like that person. And they're the person who's gotten really badly stuck. I want to be very respectful, because there are so many reasons that someone can get badly stuck, and I don't want to be flippant about that. And I recognize the concern that "If I start going down the path of big feelings, big 'bad' feelings, will I become like those kinds of people that I don't want to become like?"

And so I just found that such a valuable challenge. "Until we can tell the truth about our pain, we can't embrace the truth about our rescue."

So let's flip that.

"When we can tell the truth about our pain, we can embrace the truth about our rescue." Which I think is what those two hands are, right? About the present reality and the future promise.

Amy Carroll

This whole idea of 'I open Pandora's box, then what?' I have actually been living that reality, I feel, in the last couple of years – and the 'Then what?' is kind of hard. Because once it's open, then you have to learn how to manage those emotions. And I found – at least for me – that I have started at the beginning. There are times because I have started to allow myself to feel anger about certain things, that I kind of handle anger like a toddler.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah.

Amy Carroll

And I am having to learn how to mature in handling those emotions that I squelched for so long. So opening Pandora's box *is* tough.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah.

Amy Carroll

But as you said, it is the prerequisite for embracing the rescue.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah, yeah. Can I share some research?

Amy Carroll

Yes please.

Cheri Gregory

Nerdy girl is going to pull out a book over here. Okay. Because we grew up, we all grew up, I'm guessing, most of us grew up hearing that we have five senses, right. But it turns out, Amy, we have eight senses. Did you know that?

Amy Carroll

What?

Cheri Gregory

We do. I'm not making this up.

Amy Carroll

I really didn't know. Please enlighten us because I bet a lot of people don't know.

Cheri Gregory

Okay. And I promise you this is going somewhere really important that does tie into the whole emotion stuff and the stuff we didn't know about our emotions that once we know now can make a real difference.

So we have something called *vestibular* sense and that has to do with our balance. We have something called the *proprioceptive* sense and that has to do with where we are located in space – I have terrible proprioceptive sensory awareness, it's why I'm covered with bruises all the time, I turn like six inches too soon and walk into the banister or the furniture or whatever, I'm not real spatially aware.

But the eighth one is called interoception. We have sensory perception on the outside of our bodies. That's exteroception. But interoception is our awareness of what's going on inside of our bodies.

And I first became aware of this when I was teaching my class Growing Sensitive & Strong. And somebody said, "Well, what about menstrual cramps? Does that count as one of our senses?" and I was like, "Well, it's certainly pain, but it's not coming from the outside..." And I was like, "Oh, my goodness!" It's our body creating sensation on the inside of us, or menopause, for example, when you turn into a human volcano – it's sensory stimuli, but it's not coming from the outside. It's coming from the inside.

So last year is when I read *Do Hard Things*. And so I'm just going to read a couple of things, because there's a whole chapter on interoception and its relationship to emotions.

And let me just pause here: women have a fraught relationship with their emotions, right? We already established that in our interview with Michele.

By any chance, do you feel like we have a difficult relationship with our bodies?

Amy Carroll

Yes.

Cheri Gregory

Which is the worst relationship, our relationship with our bodies or our relationship with our emotions? Like it's a toss-up, right?

Amy Carroll

Yes.

Cheri Gregory

How many times have I joked about being a head on a stick? It's no longer a joke, I realize. It's kind of like been self-defense, like deny your body, deny your emotions, keep everything in your head. But that's not the way God created us.

So just a little tiny bit from this chapter: "Feelings serve as our first line of defense. They provide vital information. Feelings help us make better decisions."

Okay, were you taught that as a child? I was not taught this as a child.

Amy Carroll

No.

Cheri Gregory

I was taught the exact opposite. Okay. And so I'm going to jump all the way to the end of the chapter, I'm going to skip all the stuff here just to get us to the to the conclusion here:

“The better we can read and distinguish the internal signals that our body is sending, the better we are able to use feelings and emotions as information to help guide our actions, instead of missing the signal, or moving straight from feeling to reacting. The better our interoceptive abilities, the better we handle stress.”

And the bottom line for me has been I spent all of this energy, hating myself for having emotions ... thinking I was a terrible Christian woman for having all these emotions ... suppressing, denying, numbing, and what I am slowly discovering (and yes, Pandora's box is not fun, okay? I don't mean to, in any way, shape, or form, make Pandora's box sound enjoyable) ... but the bottom line is that our bodies, from the inside, God created our bodies to give us information. Information about whether we feel safe ... information about whether we feel heard, or valued, or belong, or all these other things that He created us to have as legitimate needs.

And when our bodies are sending us signals, and we're busy stuffing it all down, we're not going to be making healthy decisions. And that's where things like toxic positivity come from.

I don't know if this is an encouragement to you, or any of our listeners – who are in that toddler stage of learning emotional language and expression. But you're early on in learning a skill in listening and interpreting those signals. And then managing – managing is a great term for it! Learning how to use that information, and manage or metabolize and move forward with it.

But I have been stunned because basically what that chapter says, is that listening to our bodies, getting good at *interoception*, and then naming, actually being able to name – which is why I have all my little tools for naming emotions around me – he says that's the key to **resilience**.

Cheri Gregory

When we can actually feel what's happening in our bodies, give it names for those emotions, that's actually what makes us more resilient. And I was taught the exact opposite.

So all that lecture is to say, my friend Amy, is you – even though this feels terrible, and you feel like Pandora's box is open – you are becoming more resilient!

Amy Carroll

So fantastic. And I have 1000 connections happening in my brain because I've actually been writing and speaking about this in different terms than that. And sometimes it's so amazing, you know, when science proves God's word to be true. But in *Esther*, we talked about how our feelings are catalysts for righteous action.

And of course, I am Action Amy. I initially processed it like, "If you're angry about racial injustice, that's good! Use that as a spark to fuel some righteous action that will connect our heart to God's." One of the things I love that Michele talked about is our God is a passionate, feeling God. That is 1,000% true.

And if you doubt it – which some people might be reacting kind of viscerally to that right now – really do a word study of some emotion words, and see how God expresses them in Scripture. It's stunning.

And in the Jewish tradition – and I wrote about this in *Esther*, because Mordecai ripped his robes and sat in sack cloth and ashes, that his grief was a catalyst for a righteous action to save His people.

So I had been processing it that way as like, "This gets us moving, it gets us doing good things." But then I taught about it more recently, about how the positive aspects of our "negative" emotions. We've titled them as negative things, but I put quotation marks around that because they're not actually negative. And when I started thinking about it, I was like, "Wait a minute." Our "negative" emotions: anger, grief, sorrow, lament, rage, all the different things that we could list.

They can actually be that indicator that Michele talked about, that catalyst for righteous action for ourselves, too.

Cheri Gregory

Yes.

Amy Carroll

My anger may be an indicator — a catalyst — for me to turn to God. It might be a catalyst for me to get a therapist. It might be a catalyst for me to take anti-anxiety [medication]. I mean, it can be a catalyst for righteous action. You just called it good decisions. Right? To make a good decision – and these emotions benefit us, as well as moving us towards righteous action for others as well.

So anyway, gosh, all these connections.

Cheri Gregory

Okay, so are you ready to have your mind blown?

Amy Carroll

Yes, please.

Cheri Gregory

One of my coaching clients who has read our books and adores you, Leslie Newman –

Amy Carroll

Oh, I love Leslie!

Cheri Gregory

– she’s the boundaries expert in the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe. She leads a workshop every single month for those of us who are HSPs who need to learn boundary setting in ways that work. (That aren't ‘Just do it.’ The Nike slogan doesn't work so well for us HSPs!)

But she said, “Well Cheri, you know how you talk about “The Need with Your Name on It”? What if **YOU** are your primary need with your name on it?”

Amy Carroll

Oh, wow.

Cheri Gregory

I was like, “Oh, my.” I sent her all sorts of mind blown, mic drop, truth bomb emojis. Because I was like – of course, when I came up with that idea, I was thinking only of service to others. What is the **missional** need with my name on it that God has given me? Never occurring to me that the first need with my name on it is ME.

And I don't mean that in terms of license or becoming self-centered or MEgo-centric. But I'm finally starting to understand that really, and we've said this before, but it's finally sinking in. The person who has the responsibility to meet my needs — is **me!** Thinking other people are going to do it or thinking I can just get by without having my needs met at all? Not working.

So yeah.

Amy Carroll

And we are actually not healthy enough to help anyone else if we are people walking around with gaping wounds.

Cheri Gregory

One little illustration I wanted to give – and you know, let me do a disclaimer, I should have said earlier:

When I'm talking about emotions, I'm not talking about reactivity. I'm not talking about being dysregulated. I'm not talking about just having a reactions and shrapnel flying everywhere.

There's a huge difference between **reaction** and **emotion**.

Amy Carroll

Yes. Good definition.

Cheri Gregory

One of the things that happened to me in the last month is I had a situation where I experienced a disappointment. It wasn't life-shattering, but it was significant. I had worked on a

project, I'd done my best, and the results were not what I was hoping for. And so as I was processing and pray-cessing it, I found something interesting happening: I found my brain trying to find a way to blame myself.

Like this instinct for 'all my fault,' for self-recrimination, as Michele brought up, to find a way to blame myself, I was like, "Why am I doing this?" And because of all the research I've been doing on regret, I was more conscious of it.

And I was like, well, because if I can make it my fault, if I can find a way to blame myself, then I can fix it. Like, if I could just figure out what I did wrong – and I recognize that that fix-it urge is actually also a trauma response known as **frenzy**. It's the busy-busy-busy, let me just **do** something, let me **produce** something (to use the language you've used before!)

And I was like, well, but honestly, like, genuinely even going into this project, I was like, I have genuinely done the best I can. Like I knew that. And I was like, okay, I cannot work up any self-blame here. So what am I going to do? And why am I trying to find self-blame?

And I realized, because if I couldn't blame myself and fix it, I had to feel my disappointment. Like, that was what I was going to have to do. I was doing everything within my power to make it my fault, so that I could avoid feeling my actual feelings of **sadness** and **disappointment**. And recognizing it, I was like, "Alright, here we go." Not my favorite thing, zero skill level.

And so here I am sitting with my feelings of sadness and disappointment. And God is like, "Alright, what's next on the schedule?" And I'm like, "Oh, no, I don't have to do anything today. I'm too busy feeling sad and disappointed!" And then I looked at my schedule and I realized, "I am perfectly capable of doing the next things on my list."

Because it wasn't this big, huge anything. It was – and I put this very gently in quotation marks – it was "just" sadness. It was "just" disappointment.

And I realized, yes, I did want to take extra good care of myself and treat myself with extra gentleness.

But part of that meant not falling behind on my schedule. It meant actually following through on the commitments that were actually there rather than blowing up my schedule in reactivity, which is what it used to be.

I did *not* enjoy feeling the sadness. I did *not* enjoy feeling the disappointment. But it was overall a very calm day.

And all the people who told me that if I felt my emotions, they would ruin my life and run my life, they either lied to me or they didn't understand. Because that day, what actually happened as I felt my real feelings, is I processed and pray-cessed through them, and I went on with my life.

And I realize my example is a small one. It's not a huge tragedy. It's not a huge grief. It's not anything huge. But it did illustrate for me that emotions are not the big bad bugaboo that I've been told my whole life they are.

Amy Carroll

Okay. How dare you. It's so amazing! Yes, yes, yes. And I think – like I don't go into a frenzy of action, but I go into a frenzy of rumination. In fact, I have spent months in a frenzy of rumination about a topic, and that is very, very helpful.

Okay, so I wanted to find something that Michele had said. Because what you said is so good. And I remember, it ties into something my therapist talked to me about one day, she said, "What do you do when you feel that?" I was like, "I move on. I keep going, I keep moving." And then I ruminate, right. So I look like I'm still functioning, but I'm not really functioning well. And she said, "Next time," – this was an instance where I woke up feeling a way – she said, "Next time you do that, I want you to lay there for a few minutes and feel it. And then I want you to pray about it. And give it to God," you know, talk to God about it.

And Michele said that "Exposing our broken hearts allows us to take them to the only person that can truly heal them."

Cheri Gregory

Yes. Yes!

Amy Carroll

And so if we don't expose those feelings, if we don't feel the feelings, if we don't name them, like your cards and your graph help do, the other book *Atlas of the Heart* by Brene Brown, great, great book – if we don't do that, then we never are able to hand that broken heart over to Jesus to heal it.

And what you did is you paused, you experienced the emotion, you talked to God about your schedule and how it affected your schedule, and He allowed you to move forward.

That's a great picture. So important. This is important, important conversation.

Because as you and I have talked about, one of the one of the things leveled at women in the church is “You’re too emotional,” you know, women can't be in leadership or do this or that because they're too emotional.

So what do we do? We try not to be emotional.

It's a falsehood. It's a false accusation. And then it keeps us from living healthy lives of being our truest, healthiest, God-created selves. And it's just a shame. But that cycle seems to be at the forefront and being addressed. And hopefully broken.

Cheri Gregory

Yes. Absolutely.

Well, and then one last thing that I love that Michele said is “This is not about doing more work. It's about resting in the work that's already been done.” And, you know, every Friday, I spend time in Lectio Divina with a small group of women in the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe. And we go through a particular passage of scripture three separate times with the different questions and almost without fail, when it comes to “What emotions do you feel?” “What personal struggle or longing in your life today is God speaking into?” I'm almost always feeling gratitude. And I'm almost always – when it comes to the struggle – I'm almost always drawing a T-chart. And on one side is what God is doing. And on the other side is what the human is doing.

And the struggle is that I have thought that there's more action, there's more stuff I'm supposed to be doing. And you know, like Michele said, “Just give me a checklist,” you know, versus – and I just pulled up the one we did last week, it was Ezekiel 36:24-36. And I even underlined, “I will **gather, bring** you back, I will **sprinkle** clean water, I will **cleanse** you, I will **give** you a new heart.” – and of course this is where the well-known scripture – “I will give you a new heart and **put** a new spirit within you. I will **remove** from you your heart of stone and **give** you a heart of flesh. I will **put** my Spirit and **move** you to follow my decrees.”

Right? Like I don't even have to white-knuckle obedience, He will move me to follow His decrees – while still respecting freedom of choice “and to be careful to keep my laws, I will be your God, I will **save** you from all your uncleanness.” And then at the very end of this particular passage, “I the LORD have spoken and **I will do it.**”

And if you go through it looking for where's the work we're supposed to do? The work we're supposed to do is that four letter word that I have struggled with as long as you've known me: it's that r-e-s-t word. And I just loved how Michele put it, that **we rest in the work that Christ already did on the cross.**

We're not lounging on the couch eating bonbons and being l-a-z-y (the other four letter word) but we are resting in the fact that it is finished because He's the one who did the work and He's the one who declared that it's finished.

Amy Carroll

That's a mic drop. It is. It really is. And you know that rest – and I think I've reflected on this before we even ended last year – is it's peace. There's so much peace in that.

I've kind of underneath it all believed that peace was for slackers.

But what you just described is **peace comes in rest because God is at work.**

Cheri Gregory

Yes.

Amy Carroll

So beautiful. So hard for a reforming perfectionist to really live in.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah ... it's true.

It IS hard ... and it's so, SO worth it!

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #273 of Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST!

Check out the webpage for this week's episode at
<https://GritNGraceThePodcast.com/episode273/>

There you'll find the transcript plus links to the various resources we mentioned.

Be sure to tune in next week when we'll be interviewing our first and most frequent Grit 'n' Grace guest, the one and only Kathi Lipp!

For today, grow your grit ...

... embrace God's grace ...

... as you rest in the work that's already been done.