Be Known, the Podcast

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Episode 88: On Parenting Yourself

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This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. Welcome back after we took a break during Lent. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_88\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, we are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of.

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So in our last episode, we talked about seeing the inner child in others. Seeing that beyond their behaviors is a child that may or may not have gotten his or her needs met, that there’s a child longing for connection and safety and love just as much as adults do.

And I briefly mentioned seeing the inner child in ourselves, too.

This is healing work from attachment wounds and trauma.

But today, I want to talk about parenting yourself.

In an ideal world, parents would be perfectly loving and caring, always attentive to their child’s emotional, physical, relational, material, and spiritual needs. That parents would meet those needs with kindness, compassion, empathy, and grace. That parents would never hurt their children in any way. That they’d never let them down. That abuse wouldn’t exist. Or neglect.

But we don’t live in a perfect world, do we? Those of you who have parents say ‘yes and amen’. And those of you who are parents can say the same.

Now this episode isn’t a bash our parents kind of post. I’m a counselor and also a daughter and a mom. I’ve heard some of the worst things imaginable in the counseling room— things parents have done to their children. I’ve also grown up with imperfect parents, and I’m an imperfect mom, too. Nope, this isn’t a “our parents suck” kind of episode, though maybe they do. Maybe *we* do.

No, remember, today I’m talking about parenting yourself.

Because we don’t live in an ideal world, and people suck sometimes, as children we weren’t often parented in the ways we needed. Maybe there were moments when we needed our parents to attend to us with compassion instead of brushing us off. Maybe there were moments we needed protection but felt anything but. Maybe we made bids for connection like John Gottman says, but those bids were ignored. Maybe we wanted less yelling, less anger outbursts. Maybe we wanted our parents to enjoy our company.

Whether your parents abused you in any way, or neglected in some ways, or maybe just weren’t emotionally mature parents, we all have these wounds. These attachment wounds.

And many of our parents may have been humble enough to make repairs, to right the wrongs and apologize and work to get better. But many of our parents didn’t do this.

And regardless of a repair, the damage was done. And because of this, we grow up as people who don’t know how to treat ourselves. We don’t have self-compassion or self-respect. We don’t know how to quiet the inner critic or protect ourselves in healthy ways. We expect too much of ourselves and think the worst of ourselves when we fail. We discount our emotions and apologize for stupid things (um, guilty) and don’t believe there is a place for us, for our voice.

And it’s time we began to parent the inner child in ourselves the way that inner child needed back then, the way that child still needs.

There are so many things here we could focus on, but today, I just want to give three main ways we needed parenting and how those can translate today. These are based off of attachment-focused EMDR interventions, p.s., but I won’t get into those trenches today. Your welcome.

1. Nurture yourself.

 A nurturing parent takes care of her child’s needs— encourages body movement because exercise is vital to health, feeds the child nutritious food, does everything in her power to ensure their child is getting enough sleep. They provide for their children, get them clothes, provide a safe place to live. Without making a child feel bad for these things— like getting angry any time you have to buy something for their kid or saying something “you should be grateful I give you everything you need.” Nope. Big thumbs down. (And gulp, I’m guilty of this, too). A nurturing parent also tends to a child’s other needs- like spiritual needs, not only taking them to church every Sunday cause that’s just what you’re supposed to do, but discipling them. Letting them ask questions about God. Talking about spiritual things with them and modeling what it looks like to be a person of faith. A person willing to believe in something bigger than themselves. It’s attending to their emotional and relational needs— not treating them like their emotions are “too much” or that they are too much. It’s spending quality time with them and helping them feel seen and loved and valued. It’s letting them feel their feelings and helping them know what to do with those emotions. It’s showing kindness and compassion and empathy. It’s not expecting too much or too little and allowing children to be children. It’s not harsh words or tones.

So if a nurturing parent needs to be like this, as adults, we can parent ourselves in this way, too. We need to be able to identify and work to meet our own needs, too. We can lean into self-compassion and kindness. We can allow ourselves to play. We can believe we matter, and treat ourselves as such.

2. Protect Yourself

 A protecting parent is not a helicopter parent, necessarily, but a parent who wants their child to feel safe. It’s providing a safe home, but it’s also advocating for their child. It’s not yelling or abusing or neglecting. It’s being a safe person for them, and prioritizing that others around them are safe, too. It’s believing them if they tell you someone has hurt them and taking further action if necessary, like calling authorities if abuse has been disclosed. It’s telling them you’ll see them later, and meaning it. It’s communicating a lot when they feel scared, and maybe staying with them if their fear doesn’t go away. Some would say this is babying a child. NOPE. Children need to feel safe and secure with their families and in their environments and with other people they’re around a lot. It is paramount to their development.

 What we tend to do as adults, though, is protect ourselves in unhealthy ways— like shutting the world out and withdrawing, becoming aggressive toward others, always being defensive, or maybe even do something to numb out hard emotions and experiences (like excessive alcohol or drug use, problematic porn use, excessive social media scrolling or TV, etc.). Or maybe we protect ourselves with keeping ourselves busy.

 We need to parent ourselves today by protecting ourselves, but not in those ways. Protecting yourself today can look like healthy boundaries, not discounting your voice, using your voice with assertiveness, and not taking on blame or responsibility for things that aren’t yours to hold. It’s listening to yourself and prioritizing safe relationships.

3. Counsel Yourself

 Now this doesn’t mean you don’t need wisdom from the outside, or from Jesus. We absolutely do. But parents are supposed to lead and guide their children. They are supposed to be wise with their actions and words as they help their children grow up to become wise adults. They model the right thing to, apologize when they do the wrong thing, and help children understand wise and unwise behaviors. They don’t just preach to their children, though. No. They also allow their children to make decisions and learn from those decisions.

 Parenting yourself means finding an inner voice of wisdom. Usually that wisdom is hard-earned or learned, and much of it can come right out of Scripture or words from wise people. It means thinking critically and not making decisions impulsively. It means processing as needed and being patient with yourself. It’s leading yourself. To an extent, we’re all responsible to do this. God leads, yes. Our leaders lead, yes. But we can lead ourselves well in how we spend our time and money and energy, how we treat ourselves and others, and what we choose to fill our minds and bodies with, too.

ENTER MUSIC—

There’s so many other things here. Seriously. But the main thing I want you to hear today is that I’m sorry if your parents didn’t give you what you needed. I’m sorry if they neglected you and didn’t protect you. I’m sorry if they hurt you and didn’t guide you into wholeness and truth. I’m sorry they didn’t play with you and they told you you were too sensitive. I’m sorry they abused you. I’m sorry they abandoned you.

And I pray you’re on a healing journey to mend these wounds.

But I also pray that as a part of your healing, you’d learn to see and parent the inner child within you in the ways you needed when you were a kid.

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Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that parenting yourself will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

I’m excited to open up sponsorship for episodes. If you have a product or service you’d love for me to share about here in this space, you can financially sponsor an episode and I’ll share about your stuff! I’m also opening the option for silent sponsors for those who’d just like to sponsor an episode and would it to be just between me and you. If you’re interested in either of these options, please email me at info@kerrahfabacher.com or DM me on Instagram @kerrahfabacher and I’ll share more of those details with you.

To finish up, the transcript for this episode will be on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com).

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and the team at Wildfire Creative Co for editing.

Until next time friend, I’ll see you soon.