This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode 40. 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. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

————

The other day at work, I sat with one of my coworkers at lunch. We have a great workplace dynamic, one that allows each of us to be our authentic selves without judgment. It is a safe place. And honestly, I’ve never experienced anything like it in any of my previous jobs. It’s a place where we can be honest about who we are and how we’re doing. We can talk openly and have great dialogue. So at lunch that day, it was just me and my friend Kendall. I don’t know how we got here, but at some point in the conversation I knew I stood at a crossroads. I could be honest with her about how I was doing and feeling, or I could pretend everything was fine.

So I chose honesty. Because honesty is the only way we can ever be known.

I shared with her some of the deeper things of my heart. Things that are too personal to share here with you, but Kendall is a safe person. And if we can’t be honest with our safe people, then we can’t be honest with anyone.

In that moment, she heard me. She listened and looked me in the eyes and didn’t judge or think I was stupid for feeling that way. She was gentle and encouraging. And I walked out of the conversation feeling so seen. This is the beauty of authenticity and vulnerability and honesty. Deeper relationships are formed. And healing happens.

But there is also risk involved. People don’t always respond like Kendall. And we need to understand that vulnerability can get complicated. Today, I want to share what I call the Three R’s of Vulnerability. These are the three most important things to remember when you are wanting to share honestly with another person.

1. The Risks

I think sometimes we have very valid fears about taking off masks and showing others what is underneath. Other times our fears can be a bit irrational, but sometimes, yes, they are valid. We fear:

Judgment- We fear the opinions of others. We wonder if we are truly ourselves or share parts of ourselves with them that they will judge us in some way. And often we turn around and stick a judgment from others onto ourselves, walking around with a label that may or may not be even valid or helpful. The judgments of others on us is inevitable, though. This fear is real because it stings to be judged by another, especially another that does not know you. It stings a lot. But it is also inevitable. We cannot control the attitudes, opinions, or judgments others have of us. Say that again louder for the people in the back. Should we judge others? No. But do we? Yep. All the time. I think this is part of the brokenness that is in humanity. We judge others' motives and thoughts. We judge their actions. Their political views. We judge their decisions. We judge their theology. We judge their relationships. YOU NAME IT. You cannot escape the judgment of others, and neither can I. But you know what you can do? You can let them go. You can choose to toss them aside and focus on the opinions of those that really matter to you. The opinion of my husband means more to me than an acquaintance or even my closest friends. But you can also go back to the truth of the word, because that opinion is the one that actually matters the most. The truth that sets you free. Are the opinions of others lining up with that? If not, maybe those are the opinions you don't internalize and toss aside. Just saying.

Rejection- We fear that others will leave us when they really see who we are. I can't show you my quirks, my flaws, my fears, my feelings. I can't share with you with my beliefs or my values. You won't want me anymore if you see behind this mask. You won't like what you see. OK, let's get real about this, too. It is incredibly painful when you open yourself up to someone, and they reject you in turn. This is so painful. Heartbreaking, even, at times. But y'all, this will happen, too. You won't be everyone's cup of tea. And that's ok. Your personality may not be a good fit for another person. Your beliefs may offend them. They may not like your quirks. And it's ok. Because you have a God that sees you, sees the depths in you, and still loves you. You are His cup of tea, friend. He will never reject you. He won't leave you. He sees, and he remains.

Imperfection- We fear that others will notice that we don't have it all together, that we have flaws. That our life isn't as Pinterest perfect as we make it out to seem. That our tables are not sticky. That there are not toys on our floors. That we don't have arguments with our friends or spouses or kids. That we love our jobs that we secretly hate. That there is no sin hiding behind the facade of perfection. But isn't this mutual understanding of each other's flaws and imperfections what connects us all in the end? This ability to relate to one another? I know that when someone shows me their flaws, I don't feel so alone in mine. And PS, the only perfect one is Jesus, so why not be real and allow others to see your imperfections? Those imperfections remind us all that we are in this together, and that we all deeply need Jesus.

Betrayal- We fear that if we share something vulnerable with another, they will use it to harm us. To tell someone else, to betray our trust, to belittle us with that knowledge. This happens way too often. It has happened often in my own story, and this is probably the biggest reason why I struggle with authenticity with others today. Because you never know what this person will do with the information you just shared with them. You never know. This is real. I feel like this risk is the heaviest. This one is how walls get put up. But people will let you down, friend. Because they are people. They are not God. They will screw up. And you will let others down, too. We can't control others' responses, only ours. We can choose to take the walls down, let safe people in, hope that they will not betray our trust. But if they do, we can walk toward forgiveness (sometimes a LONG journey), and we can learn more about boundaries and who are our safe people. And we can always go back to the truth that Jesus will not betray us. He will not betray us. He knows what it feels like.

For all the risks, we have to weigh the costs of being authentic with others. Because if we are honest, these things could happen. But if we never take the risk, we may never know genuine connection. And then we may not ever grow or heal. Authenticity is risky. But it's ok. Sometimes it is worth the risk.

2. The Responsibilities

When we share parts of ourselves and take off the masks, I think it is vital to be careful here. Being too cautious can keep you from connection with others, and being too loose can lead to all of those risks and more. Where is the middle?

This is where boundaries come in.

In a couple of episodes, I will talk more about safe people, but you can go back and listen to Episode 6: Be the House with the Picket Fence to hear about how to know with whom is safe to share vulnerable parts of your life.

When we open ourselves to others in vulnerable ways, there is risk. Because of that, we must be responsible for how we share, what we share, and with whom we share.

3. The Rewards

When we understand the risks and are responsible with what comes out from behind the mask, the rewards can be so beautiful, friend.

We can experience deep, life-long friendship. We can show others that we are people, too, and become relatable to them. We can know and be known. We can move out of loneliness and hiddenness and maybe even shame. We can move into healing and forgiveness and health.

We can know and *be* known. What an incredible reward that outweighs the risks! The risks are scary and sometimes unpredictable, but without vulnerability, we can’t be known.

Enter music—

To end our time today, I want to speak this prayer over us.

Lord,

It is so scary to let others in,

To let them really see me.

See my personality.

See my values and beliefs.

See my sins and struggles.

See me.

But I long for connection.

Help me to be brave and open the gate for others to come in.

Help me to be responsible with how I share, what I share, and who I share with.

And through my courage to be vulnerable,

I ask that you would bring beautiful connection.

May that connection help me grow.

May that connection help me heal.

And may that connection do the same for others.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that knowing the risks, responsibilities, and rewards of vulnerability will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

Do you get the Monday Minute in your inbox every week? On weeks the podcast comes out, you can go deeper and dig into the podcast content in a personalized, reflective way. This is where you can see growth happen. Sign up today to get the Monday Minute at the link in my Instagram bio or on my website.

To finish up, the transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website, kerrahfabacher.com.

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

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