**Episode 55: When Someone You Love is Grieving**

This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_55\_\_\_. 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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I was planning on a different topic today, but right now, it seems we need to talk about something a bit harder. Right before I sat down to write this episode, I found out some heart-breaking news. A good friend’s mom tried to killed herself.

I don’t have any words.

I feel like I’ve been spared the direct hits lately, but every time I turn around another friend has lost a family member suddenly. Or is dealing with serious hardship and suffering and loss. There have been seasons when I’ve taken those hits, but for the most part right now, it’s people I love. As a counselor, you’d think I’d get use to hearing bad news.

But it just keeps happening.

It’s such a strange place to be— where the grief isn’t yours, but you are watching it happen all around you.

It’s feels terrifying— like when is this going to happen to me?

It feels confusing— God, how could this happen? Or how am I supposed to love and serve and support them? I don’t know what to do or say.

I don’t know how to make it better.

To save their marriage.

To make their mom breathe again.

To heal their brain tumor.

To ensure they can get pregnant.

To pay off their debts.

To take their pain so they don’t have to hold it anymore.

When we love someone who is grieving, who is suffering, we don’t know what to do. How to help. But I think it’s helpful to make sure we aren’t turning the attention to ourselves— thinking, what can I do? What should I say? Instead, let’s turn our attention back to the one who’s in pain. Because when we see them, we begin to see what they need.

**Here’s what we shouldn’t do when someone we love is in pain:**

**1. Give unsolicited advice or really *any* advice.**

At least they are in a better place

It must have been God’s time.

Maybe it’s God’s will.

I know how you feel.

What did you do to deserve this?

It’s going to be okay.

One of the worst ways you can try to help is by saying words like this. I know we mean well, but we can’t say things like this. It only makes it worse. And honestly? It’s not at all being sensitive to a person’s needs in a moment. Instead, we need to be slow to speak and quick to listen. We need to lean in, notice what they need. Even when they can’t tell us. We need to be willing to simply sit with someone in their pain without feeling the need to rescue them. It’s okay just to sit quietly with a person. To provide the comfort of your presence, your touch. Sometimes without even saying a word.

**2. Overcrowd them.**

Sure, we may want to serve them and bring them food and help clean their house, but if we overstay, it can become even more draining for the one in pain. We need to allow them their space. If they need our presence, then we give it. If they need alone time or time with their family, we give it. We need to recognize when we may be overwhelming them. And gently back off.

**3. Ask them over and over what they need.**

Because they don’t always know. Most of the time, they aren’t able to verbalize this in their pain. So anticipate what they could need. Groceries. A meal. Help picking up their kids. A card. And just provide it without asking.

**4. Ask them too many questions in general.**

You don’t want to answer tons of questions when you are in pain, do you? I know I don’t. If they are in therapy, let their counselor ask them really hard questions. You can ask some things, but too many questions about what happened and how they are feeling can be invasive. Some people don’t mind the questions because they are external processors, but others need time and space to just be. They might be too numb or exhausted to talk about it in depth with you. Give them space. You’ll know when they begin to welcome more questions because they will start to open up more to you about how they are doing. If you simply ask, “What do you need from me right now,” you may get an indicator of how much they want to say.

**5. Neglect them.**

So many of us tend to do *nothing* when someone we love is grieving because we don’t know what to do. But doing nothing is worse than doing too much or saying too much. Because doing nothing indicates you don’t care. That their pain doesn’t matter to you. You may not mean to communicate that, but maybe they interpret it that way. We can at the least say we love them. We are here. We are praying. And that we can’t imagine what they must be going through. We can join with them, cry with them.

We can be considerate humans. Our people are in pain. I think it’s helpful to think about what you’ve needed from your people in your hardest seasons of loss. What helped? What didn’t? Treat others how you want to be treated.

This topic is heavy, and I honestly didn’t know how to approach it. So I decided to give some practical ways to love today. Every situation and every person is different. Every loss is unique. So I say we set aside our own agendas when our friends and family members are grieving and just be very attentive to what they need from us. Be the friend you wish you had.

When I don’t have words, I like to borrow someone else’s. I would love to read part of a Liturgy from *Every Moment Holy Volume 11.* This one is from *A Friend of One Who Grieves.* (p. 246)

Give me wisdom, grace, and empathy, O Lord,

To simply walk beside, to let my friend lead

As they learn to navigate this grief,

And not to ever in arrogance believe that I can somehow set them straight,

Or make it right, or give advice get do not need from me.

Teach me how to set aside my own discomfort, so that I might compassionate perceive, in the context of their specific loss and their specific need, what true encouragement and helpfulness would mean.

Above all, let me learn to remain present in their life,

Not forcing them to speak of loss,

But being ever ready to listen,

To share their tears,

To steward their story— however much they choose to entrust to me— and so let me serve my dear friend well by a close and constant willingness to bear some small part of their long burden.

Amen.*[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that attending to your people who are grieving will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

The transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com). Of course you can find all the things there, and follow along with me over on Instagram @kerrahfabacher.

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.

1. *Every Moment Holy, Volume 11: Death, Grief, and Hope.* Rabbit Room Press: Nashville, TN. 2021. (p.246) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)