This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_65\_\_\_. 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

Recently, I was talking with my friend about something that I thought was pretty important to talk about here in this space with you. He knows boundaries are important, but he flinches sometimes when I talk about it. I’ve realized it’s because others’ boundaries have hurt him before. I asked him to share a part of his story for today’s episode because it’s true. Boundaries can hurt us.

We can’t protect people from the discomfort our boundaries bring, and there is always a truth here that setting and holding a boundary can bring more tension in the relationship than there was previously. No matter how good we are are setting boundaries and how respectful we are of others in the process, there are some outcomes we won’t be able to avoid.

However, when we do it in such a way that disregards another’s feelings, we run the risk of doing significant harm to them and to the relationship.

Here’s some of the story he shared with me to help you understand. He says this:

“Boundaries are helpful to promote health in relationships. They work to foster appropriate connection and protect autonomy in space which is shared. However, *there is a point when boundaries can be abused* and become hurtful for the other party in the relationship. This happens when one person sets a boundary that creates *unnecessary* *distance* between the other person, shutting them out of a level of intimacy that was previously established. *Boundaries typically cause rupture*, initially, in the relationship, but as it is practiced one can learn the help they actually provide.

I think of times in my closest relationships where other people have begun to establish new boundaries and I felt hurt in the process. Some of the most painful instances have been when these boundaries have been specific to me and not held with other people. My brother used to do this sometimes, maybe even unknowingly. We would have a rhythm that we shared, things we did so commonly that there was never a question about it. Then he would change his mind and tell me “no, I don’t want to do that with anyone. I want some space for just myself for now.” If you knew me, you would know that this concept of “alone time” is a little foreign to me, but I can learn to respect it in other people. So I would take the bait and work through my own emotions to gather what I needed to respect the boundary that established distance. My initial pain was shallow, something I could overcome because I love my brother. The deeper pain came a little later when I found out he would do all the things we normally did together with other people. This violated the boundary, in his words, of “I want to spend time alone, not just without you”. In this case, *his boundaries hurt me because they were not honest or held with integrity.* In my processing of the pain I felt, the conclusions I often came up with were that either my brother is a liar or I am unbearable to be around, neither of which are acceptable. *Boundaries can be hurtful when they are held against someone, weaponized, or single out an individual in a way that fosters “awayness” in the relationship*.”

Wow. There’s so much to unpack in his story. But I hear it, and I can relate. There are times when friends have ghosted me or distanced themselves, and I had no idea why. They never told me. And then I’ve had friends create distance because of something I did or didn’t do. Either way, their boundaries hurt, but especially when the boundary felt unnecessary, like my friend said.

I’ll break down a few statements he said so you can see how boundaries can be hurtful, but I want to say this first. Boundaries can create distance or “rupture”, but they don’t have to. Remember, a boundary is simply the line between us, where I end and you begin. Without them, we can be enmeshed with people, the line is blurred. But yes, sometimes, like my friend said, people may put more space in between themselves and others than is necessary. I’ve been guilty of that, for sure.

I’ll also say, it’s not up to me or you to decide if someone’s distance from us is warranted or necessary. People create distance for many reasons— one is they may not feel safe with you anymore. But yeh, the distance may feel unnecessary to you if you’re not sure you’ve done anything wrong or to lead someone to believe you are unsafe. Many times, people need to learn how to communicate honestly. If my friend’s brother had communicated more honestly, maybe the distance would have been less confusing for him. If he would have said, “I’m feeling unsafe with you,” or “I’m feeling uncomfortable when you….” Or even “I think I need some space from you, and this is why…” my friend would have had more clarity about what was going on.

He also said, “there is a point when boundaries can be abused.” If someone sets a strict boundary, that doesn’t mean they are abusing their boundaries, but yes, boundaries can be abused. We can set boundaries with a complete disregard for others’ feelings, and yeh, that is sometimes abusive. If you are in a dangerous or abusive situation, you don’t have to try to not hurt the abuser’s feelings with your strict boundaries. You can just go with no explanation if you want. But in regular situations, we need to be consider of others. Ghosting people isn’t okay, and lying to them isn’t okay, like my friend’s brother was doing. Speaking our mind in harmful ways isn’t okay. I think it’s fairly simple to know if you are abusing your boundaries— if you are constantly hurting people in light of doing what’s best for you, then it’s safe to say you may be abusing your boundaries.

He also said, “boundaries can be weaponized.” I think this is similar to the “abused” concept, but it goes even further. Like for example, I feel mad at my husband and I start shutting him out and not speaking to him for a while. I’m creating a boundary only for the purpose of hurting him, of making him feel bad for what’s he done, almost manipulating him to apologize or change. That’s weaponizing.

Sometimes it IS necessary to “single out an individual in a way that fosters ‘awayness’ in the relationship, but that method can be hurtful. Especially if there is no honest and clear communication about why that individual is being singled out.

I think we can all do better here. We can all try to be more considerate about our boundaries. We can be brave and tell our close people honestly if they are doing something that feels uncomfortable or unsafe or have hurt us in anyway, any behavior that would lead us to set boundaries in the first place. We don’t owe our non-close people this, but our close people? Yeh, we need to be aware of how our actions can hurt them. We can’t protect them from the sting of our boundaries all the time, but we can be honest and thoughtful. We can consider whether our boundaries are necessary or if we’re just being avoidant or putting up walls. Those actions don’t ever solve the problems in our relationships.

Let’s be people who have healthy boundaries, not hurtful boundaries.

Cool?

\*\*\*\*\*

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that trying to be more considerate with our boundaries will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

In my course, I teach people how to communicate honestly about their boundaries with people they care about, so if you need a little help with it, check out The Boundaries Bootcamp at [www.kerrahfabacher.com/shop](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com/shop).

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 editing. And to my friend for sharing some of his story with us today in such a brave way.

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