This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_47\_\_\_\_. 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.

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**47: Show Grace to Those Who Aren’t Well**

So lately on the podcast, we’ve talked a lot about safe people and not sharing too much of yourself with those who aren’t safe and considering the risks of vulnerability. I think when we talk so much about that kind of *fun* stuff, we can forget that no one is perfect! :) Sometimes we can even put up too many walls. And even though I absolutely think we should be wise with the people we let in and have some expectations of them, I don’t think it’s healthy to expect perfection. To expect someone to treat us perfectly and never let us down and love us exactly how we always need.

No, that’s not fair.

And it wouldn’t be fair of them to expect that of us either.

Because newsflash. We are all humans. And though those of us who are Christians are being made more like Jesus everyday, we still will never be perfect or love perfectly on this side of heaven.

Now listen to me: We *don’t* need to enable toxic, hurtful behaviors, or even tolerate them for long periods of time. So in this conversation, hear that. I’m not asking you to be a martyr and endure all kinds of abusive, unkind behavior from the people in your life. I know some of you may already be in situations like that. And sure, there is no greater love than choosing to lay one’s life down for a friend (John 15:13). But our sacrifices and grace don’t need to cross over into enabling. In a few weeks, we will be talking about the difference between grace and enabling, so I won’t dig too far into *that* today.

But there is a truth that we need to acknowledge together in this episode. Even after you’ve become more wise with your vulnerability and understand who your people are (the non-toxic, non-abusive, non-selfish ones), yep, even those people will let you down. And you will let them down, too.

Especially when we aren’t well.

Recently I told you that you can’t love well if *you* aren’t well.

**Well we can’t expect our people to love us super well when *they* aren’t well, either.**

*We need to be willing to adjust our expectations when someone we care about is struggling, and even more, we need to be willing to give more to the relationship (if we can) when our people are struggling.*

This has been a very difficult couple of years for literally every.single.person.you.know. No one is completely okay. We are tired and sad and anxious and longing for normalcy. Many of us are grieving or battling with financial loss or not knowing which way is up.

Can we choose more grace for one another right now?

Can we not get so offended and angry when our best friend forgets to text us back?

Can we simply say “it’s okay” if someone needs to cancel plans?

Can we not take it personally when our friend hasn’t reached out to us in a while?

Can we not bail on our spouse as soon as he doesn’t love us through our love language?

Can we choose a more gracious approach?

This conversation can be tricky because we aren’t mind readers, and we don’t always automatically know when our people are struggling in some way. Some people don’t express their feelings or needs as clearly. But when you spend enough time with a person, you can begin to pick up on some cues of how they are doing and then understand ways to show grace.

## How can we know if they aren’t doing well?

This obviously will differ based on the person and the situation, but here are some cues we can lean into.

1. Look at their face.

If you can’t do this because you haven’t seen them in a while, move onto something else. But seriously, when is the last time you studied a close person’s face? Are their eyes sunken in, their coloring dull? Do they look tired or distant? Are they able to make eye contact? When is the last time you noticed them genuinely smile? Is their jaw clenched ? Are they picking at their skin or biting their nails? These could be some indicators for you.

2. Pay attention to their body language.

Do they seem tense or relaxed? Are they shakey? Slow-moving? Turned away from people around them or turned toward? Arms crossed or at ease? Sitting close to people or off to the side?

3. Notice their behaviors and word choices.

Are they being extra hard on themselves lately? Are they saying mostly negative things or can you hear joy and hope in their words? Are they more isolated, withdrawn, and quiet? Are they sharing about irrational worries or other types of thoughts that don’t seem healthy? Have they been seeking attention? Do they close up when asked about how they are doing or how other situations and relationships are doing in their life? Are they drinking, smoking, eating, gambling, or doing other addictive behaviors more often? Are they being more impulsive? Have they mentioned not wanting to be alive or wishing they hadn’t been born? Or working more than usual? Are they sleeping all the time or never answering their friends on the phone? Just notice.

4. Pay attention to how they are with their people.

Is their any noticeable tension between them? Do they seem more quiet and withdrawn around them? Does their partner talk over them, make fun of them a lot, or talk down to them in front of other people?

These aren’t always indicators because, again, it depends on personality, situation, and other external things. However, seeing someone smile a lot and engaging with their people with ease and freedom is a pretty good indicator they are doing okay.

There are people that know how to put on a happy mask, though. They may not wear their emotions on their faces or all over their bodies or in their actions. Maybe they’ve mastered the art of the lie— for whatever reason, they don’t want others to know they aren’t okay. That’s when we need to be intentional with them and ask the right questions to check in on them to see how they are. They could be dealing with a recent loss or tension with their boss or just found out their husband cheated on them. And no one would know unless they asked and check on them. When asking those questions, make sure to notice those nonverbals I just mentioned. Sometimes if they are hiding, they will quickly change the subject or answer in a really vague, nondescript way.

If they don’t want to share with you, respect that. Just noticing this stuff, though, can inform you of what is appropriate to expect of them in a relationship with you.

## How can we be gracious when they aren’t doing well?

1. Adjust those expectations.

Episode 17 is all about this, so I won’t go into it all right now. Go check out that episode! But really? Maybe it’s simply telling ourselves that it seems like our person is struggling and maybe they can’t give as much to our relationship right now. That it’s okay if we don’t hang out much right now or they forget to call us back. That’s it’s okay if they accidentally snapped at us.

2. Consider what needs they have that you can help meet.

Would it be helpful if you ordered their groceries for the week or offered to watch their kids for a day or slipped some money into their Venmo? Maybe you can go clean their house or bring them some coffee. Maybe you can simply ask, “How are you? You seem like you feel \_\_\_\_\_ Is there anything you need right now? How can I help meet that need?” Give them a hug. Find a way to love the heck out of them right now. Of course, honor your own limits here, but man, it seems like they need their people more than ever right now.

3. Be a good listener.

Ask questions, and listen for their response. Don’t jump in and take the spotlight or tell your story about you’ve been that depressed or anxious, too. Let them be the ones who are seen. You can step back and listen well. I have several episodes about growing in the skill of listening and understanding it’s importance. They are 10, 12, 19, and 24.

4. Respect their “no.”

If they can’t hang out as much or can’t serve with you or don’t know if they can be super present right now, respect their no. Give them space. They can’t get better and heal without space to breathe.

Enter music—

When we can set aside our own selfish ambitions and vain conceits, I bet we’ll see our people more clearly. I bet we’ll notice when they aren’t okay. And no, they may not be great friends or partners or whatever during that time, but you aren’t either when you are struggling.

I hope we can step back and be more others aware, adjust our expectations, meet needs, and listen well and respect them. Our people need us, too. Let’s love like Jesus, instead of always expecting others to love *us* like Jesus. This kind of love is contagious, and incredibly healing. Because it’s all grace. And if we all need anything, it’s grace.

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Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that being more gracious toward your people who aren’t well will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

Thanks so much for being a part of this podcast. This is all free content I get to share with you each week, and I love doing it! If you’d like to give a small monthly gift to support the podcast so we can keep on going and get it into more listener’s ears, you can visit [anchor.fm/beknown/support](http://anchor.fm/beknown/support). I’m honestly so grateful for you.

To finish up, the transcript for this episode is 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 fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

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